

## **‘One size does not fit all’: Engaging students who have experienced trauma**

**Rachel Parker**

*Department of Education, Western Australia*

**David Hodgson**

*Curtin University, Australia*

Responding to the social, relational and emotional needs of school students is now squarely within the purview of schools, teachers and school support staff. The everyday work of teachers may involve grappling with student disengagement, especially in regards to students who have experienced past trauma. It is a problem that presents ongoing challenges for educators and school policy-makers seeking to work out how to respond to student disengagement through social and emotional learning. This research aims to identify the skills and knowledge that are foundational to supporting and engaging students at educational risk in social and emotional learning. Using a phenomenographic research methodology, interviews were conducted with experienced teachers who specialise in the areas of engagement, behaviour and social-emotional learning. This research identified nine domains of engagement, and presents these as a conceptual framework that can guide where and how staff in schools can intervene with modifications that will positively impact students' lives. The paper outlines a framework to help teachers and other school staff to plan and implement a responsive and dynamic approach to social and emotional learning, which can support improved immediate, short-term and long-term, health and well-being outcomes for students.

### **Introduction**

Responding to the social, relational and emotional needs of school students is now squarely within the purview of schools, teachers and school support staff. This imperative is largely on recognition that “schools are social places and learning is a social process” (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg & Walberg, 2007, p. 191). Furthermore, there is an ongoing public awareness and concern over what is reported to be escalating violence in schools and serious behavioural and mental distress problems among some students (Barry, 2018; Department of Education, 2018b). Goss and Sonnerman (2017) explain that it is not uncommon for schools to be grappling with problems of student disengagement more generally. Student disengagement may present as students withdrawing from people and activities at school, refusing to complete school work, displaying disruptive and escalating behaviour, or non-attendance. These issues are presenting ongoing challenges for educators and school policy makers (Hancock & Zubrick, 2015). In consequence, there is increasing pressure and a growing expectation that schools take the mantle for improving the social-emotional *and* intellectual capabilities of students (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011; Davis, 2003; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Some of the debate about what the problem is and what should be done about it is framed negatively and punitively, evidenced by calls to return to a more authoritarian traditional approach to behaviour management (Johnson & Sullivan, 2016). Other

approaches are driven by new research and theorising around childhood trauma, and how to respond more effectively and compassionately to challenging behaviour using trauma-informed approaches (Crosby, 2015; Morgan, Pendergast, Brown & Heck, 2015; Phifer & Hull, 2016; Record-Lemon & Buchanan, 2017). The concept of adverse childhood experiences has emerged as an explanatory risk factor that purports to explain student disengagement and challenging behaviours as an outcrop of childhood trauma and adverse experiences (Goss & Sonnerman, 2017). Balistreri and Alvira-Hammond (2016) explained that adverse childhood experiences “encompass not only harmful acts of emotional, physical or sexual abuse to a child, but also familial and socio-environmental influences such as parental drug use, poverty, and neighbourhood or domestic violence” (p. 72).

Relatedly, other research supports the view that engaging students in social and emotional learning (SEL) may operate as protective factors that can assist students in their social and emotional development (Davies & Cooper, 2013; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Waajid, Garner & Owen, 2013; Zins et al., 2007). SEL is defined as “the process through which we learn to recognize and manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviours” (Zins et al., 2007, p. 192). A meta-analysis by Durlak et al., (2011) demonstrated that assisting students in their social and emotional development may counter some of the consequences of trauma by increasing school engagement generally and fostering safe spaces. Furthermore, there is evidence that the increases in resilience and social and emotional competence are considered protective factors for individuals who have endured the cumulative effects of adverse childhood experiences (Cabaj, McDonald, & Tough, 2014; Logan-Greene, Green, Nurius & Longhi, 2014).

It is for these and other reasons that SEL has surfaced as an established area of school curriculum. In recognition of the protective nature of SEL, the Australian Federal Government—along with the States’ and Territories’ various education departments—currently include SEL as part of the national curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014). Less understood, however, is what educators might actually do at a day-to-day practical level to improve effective student engagement in social and emotional learning, particularly for students assessed as being at educational risk or who may exhibit extreme and challenging behaviours. Hence this research addresses the question: what skills, modifications and knowledge are important to support effective engagement in SEL in schools?

## **Engaging students in social and emotional learning**

Engagement in school and in learning has emerged as a normative expectation, which is attracting significant research interest (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004; Fredricks, Filsecker & Lawson, 2016; Harper & Quaye, 2009). However, engagement remains a contested term and is difficult to define (Appleton, Christenson & Furlong, 2008). There is further confusion around how engagement might be operationalised and measured (Appleton et al., 2008; Fredricks et al., 2016). Drawing on multiple sources of literature,

Trowler (2010) has summarised and explained the term *student engagement* to mean the following:

the interaction between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance, and reputation of the institution. (p. 3)

A widely used conceptualisation of engagement was provided by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) (2006), who explained that “engagement is a construct involving three dimensions: behavioural (involvement); affective (personal attachment to others); and cognitive (application to learning)” (p. 17). For many, the term engagement simply refers to a minimum standard of student participation or involvement in a task or activity; however, Harper and Quaye (2009) explained that for this kind of behavioural involvement to truly become engagement, it requires the addition of both affective and cognitive components. Behavioural engagement refers to observable behaviours such as when the student shows up, participates in class and group-work, and adopts and displays what would be considered pro-social behaviours and norms. Affective engagement concerns the emotional side of learning, such as enjoyment, interest, sense of belonging, and may include feelings of achievement, mastery, disappointment or frustration. Cognitive engagement includes the mental and intellectual investment in learning, the development of metacognition, and deep learning (Fredricks et al., 2016; Harper & Quaye, 2009).

Achieving student engagement requires input from multiple sources and the consideration of a number of influencing factors and conditions (Coates, 2005). This multilayered institutional capacity to contribute to engagement is complex, particularly when working with some groups of students who may have experienced challenging and traumatic life events. In educational circles, *adverse childhood experiences* is gaining currency as a theoretical explanatory framework for a range of challenging student behaviors, which are attributed to the effects of trauma (O'Neill, Guenette, & Kitchenham, 2010). It is often thought that these behaviours may manifest in several ways in the school context, including: complex and challenging behaviour such as violence; aggression; non-compliance; difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships; drug and alcohol use; school disengagement; learning and developmental difficulties; and, mental health concerns (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2014). The adverse childhood experiences theory is explanatory and probabilistic, not universal or deterministic. It should be understood that it is presented at a population level of general abstraction, and is not intended nor should it be used as an assessment tool or intervention guide for individuals (House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, 2018). Despite these criticisms, the adverse childhood experiences concept has proved useful in bringing together a community of practitioners (House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, 2018) who share a desire to use trauma-informed approaches to student growth and development, and importantly, to encourage schools to think through what it means to establish the conditions that are necessary to respond positively and less punitively to the possible effects of adverse childhood experiences in young people's lives (Howard, 2019).

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is thus proffered as an important ingredient in school engagement generally. SEL is said to help establish a foundation from which children can develop and build skills necessary for school and life (Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015). The past decade has seen a significant increase in the amount of studies and literature confirming the importance of teaching SEL in schools (Davies & Cooper, 2013; Durlak et al., 2011; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Zins et al., 2007). The literature demonstrates the effectiveness of SEL programming in increasing student engagement, attendance, motivation to learn, and self-esteem, leading to better academic outcomes (Buchanan, Gueldner, Tran & Merrell, 2009). In addition, researchers have observed that an increase in emotional regulation skills leads to a reduction in disruptive, aggressive, and risk-taking behaviours (Durlak et al., 2011; Nizielski, Hallum, Lopes & Schütz, 2012). Further evidence shows a correlation between social and emotional competence and positive effects on mental health in children and adolescents (Brackett et al., 2011; Dominguez-Garcia & Fernandez-Berrocal, 2018).

## **Methodology**

The aim of this research was to identify and describe the content of the experiences held by specialist teachers on the phenomenon of engaging students in SEL. In light of this aim, a phenomenographic methodology provided an effective way of collecting, analysing, understanding, and reporting on data. Phenomenography is a qualitative research methodology that aims at “mapping the qualitatively different ways in which different people experience, conceptualize, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and various phenomena in, the world around them” (Marton, 1988, pp. 178-179). Marton’s (1988) definition pointed to a focus on neither the phenomena itself, nor to the processes through which people think about it. Rather, the focus is on the “relations between human beings and the world around them” (p. 179). Therefore, the aim of phenomenographic research “is not to classify or categorise any individual participant as having a particular conception, but rather to illuminate the full range of conceptions held by the group of participants” (Loughland, Reid, & Petocz, 2002, p. 191). Results are generally produced as “categories of description” (Marton, 1988, p. 181), which are collations of the various concepts of the particular phenomena being investigated (Bowden, 2000).

In this research the focus is on establishing a structural description that encapsulates the variety of ways that specialist teachers relate to, experience, and qualitatively conceptualise the phenomena of engaging students who are at educational risk in social and emotional learning. The methodological justification for phenomenography is grounded in a conviction that teaching, and the practice of engaging students at risk in social and emotional learning, is essentially a relational and social practice. By studying this relational practice we can learn more about the “ecologies of expertise” (Niewöhner, Bieler, Heibges & Klausner, 2016, p. 70) that are central to how and in what ways particular complex and emerging problems are conceptualised and responded to. The benefits of phenomenography are that it helps to locate the variety and difference in thinking and understanding around this phenomenon, from the point of view of participants.

## Methods

### Sample and participants

The study utilised a purposive sampling technique (Åkerlind, 2012), specifically, “extreme case sampling” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 62), where “particular individuals are judged to be the most outstanding examples of a characteristic or behaviour” (Maxwell cited in Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 62) are selected. The sample included teachers who had worked within the Western Australian Department of Education for at least two years and who specialised in the field of behaviour and engagement. Participants sampled demonstrated familiarity with social and emotional learning programming, and held knowledge of Australia-wide curricular demands for social and emotional learning.

### Data collection

Because interviews are the most common form of data collection in phenomenographic research (Åkerlind, 2012), data were collected using face to face, semi-structured interviews. An invitation to be interviewed was extended to eight teachers who were identified as having specific experience working with students who exhibit extreme, complex and challenging behaviours. Participants were asked how they understood, approached and prepared for engaging students in social and emotional learning. Participants spoke of specific practices that facilitate engagement and what factors act as barriers to engagement. Participants were asked to comment on challenges to student engagement, benefits to particular approaches taken, and what could be improved or done differently. All interviews were audio-recorded, carefully transcribed by the first author, and checked for accuracy and errors. Transcriptions were sent back to participants for checking, and a second consent form was collected from the participants giving permission to use the transcribed data.

### Ethics

It was made very clear to all participants that participation was voluntary and that they had the option to withdraw at any time without explanation or penalty. Participants gave consent to be interviewed in writing. The study had University ethics approval, and further approval was granted by the Department of Education (DoE). This included permissions from the school administrators (the participants’ line managers) prior to commencing this research (Department of Education, 2018a). DoE guidelines regarding visiting school sites for research were followed. Of the eight teachers invited to participate, six accepted and were interviewed. Further demographic information regarding participants has been omitted from publication in line with the Department of Education’s guidelines on confidentiality for research participants (Department of Education, 2018a).

## Data analysis

Data analysis followed a seven-step phenomenographic process outlined in Sjöström and Dahlgren (2002) to include “familiarisation”; “compilation”; “condensation”; “grouping”; “comparison”; “naming”; and “contrastive comparison” (p. 341). Transcriptions were read numerous times in order to familiarise, clean and de-identify data. After familiarisation, a thematic coding approach was applied, which allowed for a process for compiling, condensing, and grouping the data (Olson, McAllister, Grinnell, Walters & Appunn, 2016; Sjöström & Dahlgren, 2002). An open coding method was used to organise the data into core categories or concepts (Kolb, 2012). Once the seven-step process was completed, what was left were sets of “categories of description” (Yates, Partridge & Bruce, 2012, p. 105). Further analysis searched for differences and relationships between these categories. Phenomenographers refer to this as the “outcome space” (Yates et al., 2012, p. 105), which is the final data product that “represents both the phenomenon as well as the various ways it can be experienced” (Yates et al., 2012, p. 106).

Through the coding and analysis process, the transcribed data culminated in a range of categories that were deemed to be “internally consistent, and intelligible” (Walsh, 2000, p. 26). The results reveal a cluster of categories of description. These categories show a range of differences in the way engaging students at-risk in social and emotional learning is experienced and understood, including a “comparison within the categories [that] illuminates the nature of the differences” (Walsh, 2000, p. 23). Each of these categories elucidated a domain, which is a container for specific skills and knowledge that are held by participants as being elementary to student engagement in social and emotional learning. Each of these domains will be referred to as *domains of engagement*.

## Rigour and limitations

Participants were purposively sampled based on their identified skills. Hence, results cannot be generalised or transferred to all teachers in all teaching situations. However, the aim of this research was not to produce generalisable results, but to provide insight into the phenomenon of teaching SEL. A further limitation of this study was the participants’ varying abilities to disaggregate their skills. Hence, a more focused investigation on participants’ skills may further illuminate the skills component in more detail. Interviews were conducted by the first author, who has experience working in the SEL space. To counter bias, a bracketing interview with a colleague was conducted before data collection commenced (Åkerlind, 2012). This helped to identify preconceived ideas about how the interview questions would be answered by participants. Completed transcripts were sent to participants, who were asked to read the completed transcripts and sign an additional consent form granting permission for transcripts to be included in the research.

## Results

### A conceptual model of student engagement

During the interviews, participants detailed the common reasons why students are referred for specialist assistance. Schools often seek help from specialist services when they do not have the capacity to manage the complex and challenging behaviour or engagement needs of a student, because they have depleted all the resources (human, physical and financial) at their disposal. In addition, schools may ask for help when they experience difficulties engaging a student and their family or caregivers in the education system. In many instances, a student's behaviour may be causing a safety issue in the school such as violence and aggression or causing individual harm to the student themselves. By examining the experience of this phenomenon, participants were able to discuss and identify what makes them successful in engaging students with challenging behaviours.

The results show that there are nine interrelated categories of description that represent the participants' understanding of the engagement of students at educational risk. Together, these nine categories and their relationships are called the 'outcome space'.

- *Safety*

Addressing the physical, personal, and psychological safety of staff and students. For example, *personal safety* is the student's feelings of being safe and creating '*respite for the student*', and an environment where they trust that they will not be judged, bullied, or threatened, to such an extent that they feel safe to participate. *Physical safety* involves preparing an environment in relation to student and staff needs. *Psychological safety* comes with understanding the student and their background, knowing '*what triggers them*' and their ability or capacity to self-regulate.

- *Relationships and connection*

Addressing the relationships between staff and students because '*a relationship is the number one factor that either inhibits or helps it [engagement]*'. For example, developing an understanding of 'attunement' and adopting specific therapeutic skills used to engage students, particularly students who have experienced trauma.

- *Expertise and skill*

Developing the level of knowledge and skill in both student and staff, and the process of upskilling both. Participants explain the importance of '*understanding complex behaviour*' and an understanding of '*student's universal growth needs*' to provide a basis for developing effective plans and programs that improve behaviour, emotional self-regulation, and connection as well as engagement. For example, developing an advanced understanding of child and adolescent development, social-emotional development, mental health, trauma, disadvantage, and culture.

- *Resources*

The ability of staff and students to access resources required to engage or be engaged. This includes physical, human and financial resources. For example, not having breakfast or lunch, not having a uniform, books or writing implements, or not having money for excursions and transport are conditions that often prevent students from even attending classes, and this further compromises engagement in classroom learning.

- *Time*

Refers to the importance of time when working with students. As one participant stated, *'we have the capacity to go one-on-one with these kids, if you look at schools that have 30 odd kids in the class and focusing on one individual is quite difficult for teachers'*. Understanding that for change to be made there is a need for immediate, short-term and long-term goals and interventions. For example, time means the flexibility for the duration, frequency and longevity with interactions with specific students. It also includes acknowledgement that change takes time.

- *Managing outside or external pressures*

Refers to the expectations outside of the student-teacher relationship, such as expectations from administrators, families, friends and the wider school community, and this includes policy and legislative restrictions and directives. For example, pushing back to the significant pressure to have students achieving academically and responding to what can be at times a minimal understanding about the importance of social and emotional learning and the effects of trauma. Even though participants were cognisant of where the pressure was stemming from, they also understood that *'schools are really concerned about what other parents are saying, what other students are saying'* but often *'not what is the best thing for this child'*.

- *Environmental changes*

Addressing the conditions or surroundings in which a student is present, including the physical layout of teaching spaces, people involved, relationship dynamics, sounds, smells and the visual stimuli students are exposed to. For example, adjusting seating plans, positioning in the classroom (easy exits), and planning for areas of academic or other weakness (for example, making academic adjustments in some curriculum areas, such as maths).

- *Understanding of self*

Refers to teachers and staff knowledge of themselves and their ability to critically reflect on their own practice. This assists educators to identify and address any biases and prejudices that may impact and influence their processes. Participants talked about managing their emotions. For example, maintaining a *'sense of humour'* and *'I don't freak out, nothing fazes me much, I'm calm'*. Furthermore, this category highlights the importance of self-care, in order to avoid burnout, and assessing one's own social-emotional competence.

- *Understanding of student and individualised attention*

Refers to staff knowledge of the student, understanding their background, experiences, capabilities, likes and dislikes which enables staff *'to provide a tailored program that targets their*



*specific needs and interests*?. For example, this kind of flexible responsiveness is described by Tomlinson (2014) who argues for the importance to adjust (differentiate), what is taught (content), how it is taught (process), and expectations (product), so that we may see positive outcomes for students.

Participants considered it important to understand the background and experiences of the students with whom they work. They argued that understanding students plays a key role, even if they cannot always intervene. For example: *'you hear a lot of traumatic experiences and I think you see a lot of situations where you feel like you just want to help when you can't, you go home feeling helpless'*. Yet, with a clear understanding of the student's needs, background, likes and dislikes, participants said that *'we are able to provide a tailored program that targets their specific needs and interests'*. Furthermore, they explained that through understanding *'where they are at'*, they have the ability to meet the child *'on common ground'* and therefore, foster an increased chance of engagement.

Participants warned that it is easy to compare children and their behaviour because they may share a similar history; however, they also contended that each child is different and needs to be understood as such. Observing and getting to know a student is said to help teachers identify how best to assist them. Participants reported that having a deep understanding of their student and human behaviour generally—combined with the capacity and ability to assess and then intervene—delivered better outcomes for students. Participants contended that here is no *'one-size-fits-all'* approach with disengaged students: *'there is no one right way to do it and each child is so different'*. Participants discussed that with a clear understanding of the student, there is an element of being able to *'read the play'*. Knowing a student's triggers and pre-emptively addressing their reactions leads to more appropriate practice. Furthermore, carefully adjusting the learning environment can help avoid physical escalations and promote safety. Individualised attention increases the development of a relationship and trust, and it builds a partnership that helps protect and teach each student.

## Discussion

The above categories of description represent the phenomena of engaging students at educational risk as surmised from the data in this study. In phenomenographic studies, the domains or *categories of description* tend to be organised into a hierarchical structure of significance (Åkerlind, 2012). However, the findings of this study show that this outcome space has no particular hierarchical structure; rather they should be seen as overlapping and interacting together. All domains in the outcome space are equally salient, except one, which is central to all the others. The one domain that does have a larger presence and acts as a guide to the rest of the structure is *'Understanding of student and individual attention'*. The reason this domain is significant to all the others is due to the unique nature and experience of each student (subject of the phenomenon) and each participant (observer of the phenomenon). Therefore, each experience of the phenomenon of engaging students at educational risk is unique, and, by extension, each practice response to students at educational risk must be uniquely tailored and cannot be the result of off-the-shelf, one-size-fits all approaches to teaching and engagement.

In relation to the experience of trauma and its effect on behaviour and academic outcomes, Lemkin, Kistin, Cabral, Aschengrau and Bair-Merritt (2018) called for a “greater understanding of potentially modifiable ways to promote youths’ educational success” (p. 2). This research responds to this call by identifying nine practice domains where modifications can be made to holistically improve outcomes for students who have experienced past trauma and may be at educational risk (Crosby, 2015). Overall, participants explained that there is *‘no one size fits all’* experience, that every experience is different. The domains identified in this study can explain the *variety* of experiences relating to this phenomenon.

In following, we argue that students will require different combinations of input and involvement within each of these domains, based on their specific needs. By understanding a student and their particular circumstances and needs, their areas of greatest need can be identified and appropriately responded to. This is essential to improved outcomes for social and emotional learning (Durlak et al., 2011). The outcome space we represent above can be considered a base structure. This structure represents a series of relationships between the domains and should be seen as flexible. The structure will change depending on the information provided through the domain of *Understanding of student and individualised attention* and through assessment of the specific needs and strengths of each student. To illustrate this, we present a hypothetical example of two students, showing how specific modifications to the conceptual framework we presented earlier are necessary for *Understanding of student and individualised attention*. In Figure 1, the larger the domain (circle) the greater the input or modification required.

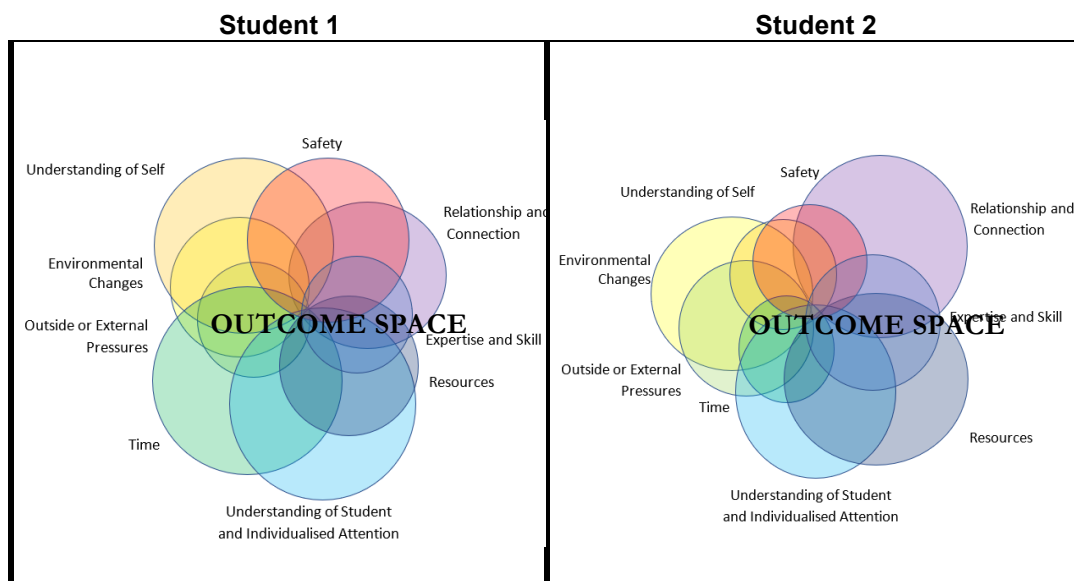


Figure 1: Differentiated representations of the outcome space of two hypothetical students (use 'zoom in' to facilitate reading of the text inside this figure)

Figure 1 demonstrates considerable variation in the model of practice between the level of input and energy that each domain requires for each student. It is important to note that all domains still need to be addressed, but some domains require greater or lesser attention or input. By utilising a model or framework such as this, schools are potentially able to increase student engagement through a multidimensional approach that considers both individual students needs as well as the organisational contextual factors that support best practice (Liem & Chong, 2017). By assessing the requirements in each domain, a map can be made of the complex system that surrounds the individual student. This map helps staff to design the ideal or optimum space for engagement. Furthermore, as this map is flexible, the system will change based on student progress and development, their level of skill mastery, and the addition and modification of elements within a complex system.

## Conclusion

The aim of this research was to provide insight into a specific phenomenon, so that some of the challenges and difficulties in engaging at-risk students in social and emotional learning could be untangled and more clearly conceptualised. There is an emerging consensus among researchers, children's organisations, teachers, families and governments that social emotional learning is an important component of children's learning and overall development, insofar as it supports the conditions for success in both school and more broadly in life (Domitrovich, Durlak, Staley & Weissberg, 2017). School staff have a unique opportunity to engage students in both academic and social-emotional learning.

This research identified nine domains of engagement that provide a road-map as to where and how school staff can intervene and make modifications that will positively impact students' lives. Using an individual planning model—where the nine domains are considered and modified—provides a robust framework for staff to ensure they are covering the required bases to get the best outcomes for their students. The results of this research assists with knowledge to inform teaching (and engagement) practice, and, consequently, will help to engage students who are currently not experiencing success at school. Further research with students and caregivers would enable other perspectives into this phenomenon, particularly by testing out the application of the domains of engagement with other stakeholders.

## References

- Åkerlind, G. S. (2012). Variation and commonality in phenomenographic research methods. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 31(1), 115-127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2011.642845>
- Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L. & Furlong, M. J. (2008). Student engagement with school: Critical conceptual and methodological issues of the construct. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45(5), 369-386. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20303>
- Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (2014). *Personal and social capability*. <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/personal-and-social-capability/>

- Australian Institute of Family Studies (2014). *Effects of child abuse and neglect for children and adolescents*. <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/effects-child-abuse-and-neglect-children-and-adolescents>
- Barry, H. (2018). *Escalating violence in WA schools prompts serious policy review*. *WAtoday*, 30 July. <https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/escalating-violence-in-wa-s-schools-prompts-serious-policy-review-20180730-p4zucw.html>
- Bowden, J. A. (2000). The nature of phenomenographic research. In E. Walsh & J. A. Bowden (Eds.), *Phenomenography* (pp. 1-12). Melbourne: RMIT Press. <https://search.informit.com.au/browsePublication;isbn=0864590199;res=IELHSS>
- Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E. & Salovey, P. (2011). Emotional intelligence: Implications for personal, social, academic, and workplace success. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5(1), 88-103. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2010.00334.x>
- Buchanan, R., Gueldner, B. A., Tran, O. K., & Merrell, K. W. (2009). Social and emotional learning in classrooms: A survey of teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and practices. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 25(2), 187-203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377900802487078>
- Cabaj, J. L., McDonald, S. W. & Tough, S. C. (2014). Early childhood risk and resilience factors for behavioural and emotional problems in middle childhood. *BMC Pediatrics*, 14, article 166. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2431-14-166>
- Coates, H. (2005). The value of student engagement for higher education quality assurance. *Quality in Higher Education*, 11(1), 25-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538320500074915>
- Crosby, S. D. (2015). An ecological perspective on emerging trauma-informed teaching practices. *Children & Schools*, 37(4), 223-230. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdv027>
- Davies, M. & Cooper, G. (2013). Training teachers to target and develop social skills as an academic enabler. In B. Knight & R. Van der Zwan (Eds.), *Teaching innovations supporting student outcomes in the 21st century* (pp. 45-55). Tarragindi, Australia: Oxford Global Press.
- Davis, H. A. (2003). Conceptualizing the role and influence of student-teacher relationships on children's social and cognitive development. *Educational Psychologist*, 38(4), 207-234. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3804\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3804_2)
- Department of Education (2018a). *Research conducted on Department of Education sites by external parties*. <http://det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/policies/research-conducted-on-department-of-education-sites-by-external-parties.en?cat-id=3457972>
- Department of Education (2018b). *School anti-violence measures strengthened*. <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/-/school-anti-violence-measures-strengthened-1?inheritRedirect=true&redirect=%2Fsearch%3Fq%3DSchool%2Banti-violence%2Bmeasures>
- Domínguez-García, E. & Fernández-Berrocal, P. (2018). The association between emotional intelligence and suicidal behavior: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02380>
- Domitrovich, C. E., Durlak, J. A., Staley, K. C. & Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Social-emotional competence: An essential factor for promoting positive adjustment and reducing risk in school children. *Child Development*, 88(2), 408-416. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12739>

- Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D. & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405-432. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x>
- Efron, S. E. & Ravid, R. (2013). *Action research in education : A practical guide*. New York: Guilford Publications.
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C. & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59-109. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543074001059>
- Fredricks, J. A., Filsecker, M. & Lawson, M. A. (2016). Student engagement, context, and adjustment: Addressing definitional, measurement, and methodological issues. *Learning and Instruction*, 43, 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2016.02.002>
- Goss, P. & Sonnerman, J. (2017). *Engaging students: Creating classrooms that improve learning*. Carlton, Victoria: Grattan Institute. <https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Engaging-students-creating-classrooms-that-improve-learning.pdf>
- Hancock, K. J. & Zubrick, S. R. (2015). *Children and young people at risk of disengagement from school*. Perth, Western Australia: Commissioner for Children and Young People WA <https://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/media/1422/report-education-children-at-risk-of-disengaging-from-school-literature-review.pdf>
- Harper, S. R. & Quaye, S. J. (Eds.). (2009). *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations*. New York: Routledge. <https://www.crcpress.com/Student-Engagement-in-Higher-Education-Theoretical-Perspectives-and-Practical/Quaye-Harper/p/book/9780415895101>
- House of Commons Science and Technology Committee (2018). *Evidence-based early years intervention*. Eleventh Report of Session 2017-19. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmsselect/cmsctech/506/506.pdf>
- Howard, J. A. (2019). A systemic framework for trauma-informed schooling: Complex but necessary! *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 28(5), 545-565. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2018.1479323>
- Jennings, P. A. & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 491-525. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308325693>
- Johnson, B. & Sullivan, A. (2016). Understanding and challenging dominant discourses about student behaviour at school. In A. Sullivan, B. Johnson & B. Lucas (Eds.), *Challenging dominant views on student behaviour at school: Answering back* (pp. 27-43). Singapore: Springer Singapore. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0628-9\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0628-9_3)
- Kolb, S. M. (2012). Grounded theory and the constant comparative method: Valid research strategies for educators. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 3(1), 83-86. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC135409>
- Lemkin, A., Kistin, C. J., Cabral, H. J., Aschengrau, A. & Bair-Merritt, M. (2018). School connectedness and high school graduation among maltreated youth. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 75, 130-138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.04.023>
- Liem, G. A. D. & Chong, W. H. (2017). Fostering student engagement in schools: International best practices. *School Psychology International*, 38(2), 121-130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034317702947>

- Logan-Greene, P., Green, S., Nurius, P. S. & Longhi, D. (2014). Distinct contributions of adverse childhood experiences and resilience resources: A cohort analysis of adult physical and mental health. *Social Work in Health Care*, 53(8), 776-797.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00981389.2014.944251>
- Loughland, T., Reid, A. & Petocz, P. (2002). Young people's conceptions of environment: A phenomenographic analysis. *Environmental Education Research*, 8(2), 187-197.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13504620220128248>
- Marton, F. (1988). Phenomenography: Exploring different conceptions of reality. In D. M. Fetterman (Ed.), *Qualitative approaches to evaluation in education* (pp. 176-205). New York, Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger.
- Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs (2006). *Australian directions in Indigenous education 2005-2008*.  
[https://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/australian\\_directions\\_in\\_indigenous\\_education\\_2005-2008.pdf](https://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/australian_directions_in_indigenous_education_2005-2008.pdf)
- Morgan, A., Pendergast, D., Brown, R. & Heck, D. (2015). Relational ways of being an educator: Trauma-informed practice supporting disenfranchised young people. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 19(10), 1037-1051.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1035344>
- Niewöhner, J., Bieler, P., Heibges, M. & Klausner, M. (2016). Phenomenography: Relational investigations into modes of being. *The Cyprus Review*, 28(1), 67-84.  
<https://doi.org/10.18452/18404>
- Nizielski, S., Hallum, S., Lopes, P. N. & Schütz, A. (2012). Attention to student needs mediates the relationship between teacher emotional intelligence and student misconduct in the classroom. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 30(4), 320-329.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0734282912449439>
- O'Neill, L., Guenette, F. & Kitchenham, A. (2010). 'Am I safe here and do you like me?' Understanding complex trauma and attachment disruption in the classroom. *British Journal of Special Education*, 37(4), 190-197.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8578.2010.00477.x>
- Olson, J. D., McAllister, C., Grinnell, L. D., Walters, K. G. & Appunn, F. (2016). Applying constant comparative method with multiple investigators and inter-coder reliability. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(1), 26-42.  
<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol21/iss1/3>
- Phifer, L. W. & Hull, R. (2016). Helping students heal: Observations of trauma-informed practices in the schools. *School Mental Health*, 8(1), 201-205.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-016-9183-2>
- Record-Lemon, R. M. & Buchanan, M. J. (2017). Trauma-informed practices in schools: A narrative literature review. *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 51(4), 286-305.
- Sjöström, B. & Dahlgren, L. O. (2002). Applying phenomenography in nursing research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 40(3), 339-345.  
<https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2002.02375.x>
- Tomlinson, C. (2014). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: ASCD. <http://www.ascd.org/Publications/Books/Overview/The-Differentiated-Classroom-Responding-to-the-Needs-of-All-Learners-2nd-Edition.aspx>

- Trowler, V. (2010). *Student engagement literature review*. London, York and Edinburgh: Advance HE. <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/student-engagement-literature-review>
- Waajid, B., Garner, P. W. & Owen, J. E. (2013). Infusing social emotional learning into the teacher education curriculum. *International Journal of Emotional Education*, 5(2), 31-48. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1085617>
- Walsh, E. (2000). Phenomenographic analysis of interview transcripts. In J. A. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), *Phenomenography* (pp. 13-23). Melbourne: RMIT University Press. <https://search.informit.com.au/browsePublication;isbn=0864590199;res=IELHSS>
- Weissberg, R. P., Durlak, J. A., Domitrovich, C. E. & Gullotta, T. P. (2015). Social and emotional learning: Past, present and future. In J. A. Durlak, C. E. Domitrovich, R. P. Weissberg & T. P. Gullotta (Eds.), *Handbook of social-emotional learning: Research and practice* (pp. 3-19). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Yates, C., Partridge, H. L. & Bruce, C. S. (2012). Exploring information experiences through phenomenography. *Library and Information Research*, 36(112), 96-119. <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/53929/>
- Zins, J. E., Bloodworth, M. R., Weissberg, R. P. & Walberg, H. J. (2007). The scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school success. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 17(2-3), 191-210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10474410701413145>

**Rachel Parker** (corresponding author) has been employed by WA Department of Education for 18 years. She is part of a multi-disciplinary team specialising in reducing problematic behaviour and increasing engagement in public schools. Rachel holds a Bachelor of Social Work with First Class Honours from Edith Cowan University and is currently a PhD candidate at The University of Western Australia.  
Email: [rachel.parker@education.wa.edu.au](mailto:rachel.parker@education.wa.edu.au)

**Dr David Hodgson** is Senior Lecturer in Social Work at Curtin University and has conducted research in the areas of education policy, social work education and family and domestic violence policy. He has recently co-authored two books: *Key concepts and theory in social work* (2017, Palgrave) and *Social justice theory and practice for social work: Critical and philosophical perspectives* (2019, Springer).  
Email: [david.hodgson1@curtin.edu.au](mailto:david.hodgson1@curtin.edu.au)  
Web: <https://research.curtin.edu.au/supervisor/dr-david-hodgson/>

**Please cite as:** Parker, R. & Hodgson, D. (2020). 'One size does not fit all': Engaging students who have experienced trauma. *Issues in Educational Research*, 30(1), 245-259. <http://www.iier.org.au/iier30/parker.pdf>