

Benefit-Cost Analysis of Social and Emotional Learning

Start Date:

July 1, 2013

End Date:

July 31, 2014

Sponsored by:

NoVo Foundation

Principal Investigator

Henry Levin

Contract Type:

Grant

Contract amount:

\$200,000

Additional Researchers:

Clive Belfield, Alli Klapp, Brooks Bowden, Robert Shand, Sabine Zander

Objective of Project:

The goal of this project is to calculate the Return on Investment (ROI) to specific social and emotional learning (SEL) programs in the K-12 domain. We will identify SEL programs that have proven to be effective at achieving their stated objectives, calculate the costs of these programs, estimate their economic benefits, and derive a return on investment (benefits minus costs) for each program. By describing and comparing the value of the benefits of specific SEL programs with their costs, the project will help to develop a useful methodology and to determine whether program interventions in social and emotional learning are sound investments.

Methods:

The analyses involve three major steps: 1) effect sizes indicating the impact of selected SEL programs in the K-12 domain are collected from existing peer-reviewed studies; 2) the ingredients approach (Levin & McEwan, 2001) is used to establish costs for each intervention. Market or shadow prices of each relevant resource are used to estimate the costs of all components of an intervention as implemented in practice at particular sites; 3) the return on investment to each program will be derived by estimating the monetary value of the benefits of each program and comparing them to the costs estimated in step two. This ROI will be expressed as an interest rate, as a net present value (benefits minus costs), and as a ratio (benefits divided by costs).

Educational programs studied:

We will select programs from those included in a meta-analysis of SEL programs by Durlak et al. (2011), an extensive search of other sources, and suggestions from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and other agencies. We will select at least six programs; depending on access to data and cooperation from SEL providers we may be able to evaluate more.

Resulting products/publications/policy action:

We will produce a written report summarizing the results of our analyses and providing appropriate recommendations to policymakers. We will also seek to publish relevant results in academic journals and present at academic conferences to share with a research audience.