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Exploring Evidence-Based Assessment Tools in the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility Model to Guide Social–Emotional Learning

By Baofu Wang and Xiaolu Liu 

The escalation of issues related to students misbehaving has become more pronounced over the past three to four years, with 70% of educators reporting more instances of misbehavior than before the COVID-19 pandemic (Prothero, 2023). Data released by the National Center for Education Statistics (2022) underscored a surge in classroom disruptions due to students' irresponsible behavior, negatively impacted by the pandemic. For this reason, there has been a burgeoning interest in recent years in employing effective social–emotional learning (SEL) programs to address student behavior issues.

Schools are well positioned to foster student SEL competencies. Since the enactment of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* of 2015 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015),

the American educational system has shifted its focus from core school subjects to emphasizing students' well-rounded and holistic development (Wright & Richards, 2021). There is a renewed emphasis on students' SEL-related variables, supported by a growing body of research that underscores the effectiveness of integrating SEL into the school curriculum, impacting both academic and nonacademic variables. A meta-analysis of 213 studies involving 270,034 students found that SEL programs significantly improved students' skills, attitudes, and positive social behaviors (Durlak et al., 2011). Furthermore, several other studies observed significant improvement in academic performance (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Panayiotou et al., 2019; Zins et al., 2007).

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Physical education (PE) has long been recognized as a conducive academic discipline for fostering SEL, due to its ample opportunities for students to practice goal-setting skills, communication and cooperation skills, and responsible decision-making abilities (Ciotto & Gagnon, 2018). Cultivating students' SEL skills within PE is essential for their holistic development, fostering an inclusive and positive learning environment, and enhancing their success both inside and outside of PE. However, previous SEL programs have faced scrutiny for their lack of an evidence-based pedagogical approach (Gordon et al., 2016), resulting in various implementation issues, including the absence of theory-driven assessment.

The Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) model (Hellison, 2011), as one of the field-tested pedagogical models in PE fostering student's well-rounded development through meaningful physical activities, provides ample assessment resources to guide SEL development. Consequently, this article aims to identify the link between TPSR and SEL and offer practical implementation strategies utilizing TPSR assessment tools to cultivate SEL development within and beyond the PE context.

The Connection Between TPSR and SEL

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is defined as the process by which individuals apply their knowledge, skills, and attitudes to manage emotions and become responsible persons, achieving personal and collective goals (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2012). The CASEL, which is a leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting SEL as an integral part of education, identifies five essential competencies; namely, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision making, and relationship skills (CASEL, 2012). Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility has been widely accepted as a model that is conducive to fostering students' SEL-related variables, such as offering enjoyable PE experience and decreasing unsportsman-like behavior (Cecchini et al., 2007), enhancing self-efficacy (Escartí et al., 2010), and providing abundant opportunities for responsible decision-making and goal-setting skills (Wright & Burton, 2008).

Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility, an instructional model developed by Don Hellison, aims to foster students' responsibility through meaningful PE experiences (Hellison, 2011). Progressive levels of TPSR are intricately linked with the five essential competencies outlined by the CASEL framework (see Table 1). At Level I of TPSR, students are expected to show respect for the rights and feelings of others, aligning explicitly with social awareness and responsible decision making. Progressing to Level II, students are required to demonstrate effort and active engagement in class activities. Active participation, coupled with sustained effort, encompasses the CASEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision making. Advancing to Level III, self-direction is closely



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intertwined with self-management within SEL. Students are expected to showcase robust self-management skills by formulating personal goals and systematically achieving them through meticulous planning and effective time management. The next level is caring and leadership (Level IV). Students assume leadership roles at this level and exhibit pronounced competencies in social awareness and relationship skills. Last, by forging authentic partnerships with the school and the community, the ultimate objective of TPSR can be realized—transferring acquired knowledge and skills from PE to other life contexts (Level V). This collaborative approach of the CASEL framework enhances the broader application of TPSR principles, contributing to the holistic development of students beyond the confines of the educational setting.

Table 1. Five Levels of TPSR

Levels	Responsibility
Level I	Respecting the rights and feelings of others
Level II	Participation and effort
Level III	Self-direction
Level IV	Helping others and leadership
Level V	Transfer outside the gym



Significance of Assessment in SEL Development

Assessment, as defined by Lund and Veal (2013), is the process of collecting evidence about students' achievement levels and using this evidence to draw inferences and inform instructional decisions. It plays a critical role in the teaching and learning process, serving not only to communicate expectations to students but also to help them understand the effort required to achieve learning outcomes (Lund & Veal, 2013). When utilized effectively, assessment can have a significant impact on student knowledge and skill acquisition, ultimately shaping their educational experience (Dinan-Thompson & Penny, 2015).

For the successful implementation of a SEL program guided by the CASEL framework, it is essential to have assessment tools that can accurately track student development levels and progress in SEL competencies (Negru & Paloş, 2023). The feedback that is gathered in the form of

assessment from diverse sources is vital for implementing the TPSR model effectively, and the assessment should reflect the core values and themes of TPSR (Wright, 2011). Precise assessment forms the foundation for understanding requirements, identifying areas for improvement, and monitoring progress over time (Garibaldi et al., 2015). According to Stillman et al. (2018), school leaders can leverage assessment data to foster a positive and supportive school climate, while teachers use these data to enhance student self-awareness, guide classroom management, and inform curriculum development. Furthermore, assessment plays a crucial role in guiding interventions and sustaining long-term initiatives at the school-wide level, ensuring lasting benefits for students, teachers, and the entire school community (D'Entremont, 2016; Stillman et al., 2018). By utilizing assessment data effectively, schools can tailor interventions to meet the diverse needs of students and create an environment conducive to academic and social-emotional growth.

Assessing SEL Using the Evidence-Based TPSR Assessment Tool

Assessment serves two primary purposes—assessment for learning and assessment of learning (Lund & Veal, 2013). In general, formative assessment is often referred to as assessment for learning. This type of assessment is mainly conducted during the learning process and is ongoing (e.g., teacher observation with a checklist, student self-assessment/peer assessment of skills), aiming to provide constructive feedback to both students and teachers, monitor student progress, and support further learning. Summative assessment, however, is considered assessment of learning, usually occurring at the end of a learning unit to evaluate students' overall understanding and mastery of content or skills (e.g., written exam on concepts, gameplay rubric). The main purpose of this type of assessment is to determine students' level of attainment against specific standards or learning outcomes. Feedback on student responsibility should be ongoing and embedded within TPSR instruction to enhance student SEL competencies, as suggested by Wright (2011), indicating the importance of formative assessment in TPSR instruction.

Some examples and implementation strategies for assessing SEL competencies within the TPSR model can be:

1. *Self-awareness*: Integrating reflective journals to encourage students to explore their emotions, personal values, strengths, and weaknesses related to physical activity. This process helps them identify areas for personal growth through the provision of prompts or guiding questions.
2. *Social awareness*: Using teacher-directed rubric-based observations to assess students' interactions during group activities or any cooperative learning activities.
3. *Self-management*: Using regular self-assessment logs to reflect on students' progress toward their personal responsibility goals (e.g., participating actively, equipment management) and make adjustments as needed.
4. *Relationship skills*: Using peer assessment tools such as checklists to assess students' contributions to teamwork during group projects or team-based activities.
5. *Responsible decision making*: Incorporating written assessments using decision-making scenarios. Specifically, teachers can present students with hypothetical scenarios or real-life situations (e.g., conflict resolution,



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social responsibilities) that require them to make responsible decisions and ask students to analyze each scenario by giving specific written responses.

Figures 1, 2, and 3 present sample assessment tools designed to assess self-awareness skills, relationship skills, and social awareness skills, respectively. These tools incorporate both formative assessments, such as student

self-assessment and peer assessment, and summative assessments directed by the teacher. Overall, teachers must integrate a variety of assessment tools that cover all five SEL competencies. These tools should allow for the collection of diverse data that accurately reflect student learning and their progress toward SEL goals. Before implementing these assessments, teachers should clearly communicate their expectations for SEL competencies and behaviors

Self-Awareness Skills Student Reflective Journal (*Formative: Self-assessment*)

Name:

Date:

Welcome to your Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) self-reflection journal! In this journal, you will have the opportunity to explore your thoughts, feelings, and actions within the TPSR framework. Remember, the TPSR model is all about helping you become the best version of yourself, both on the playground and in the classroom. Let's begin our journey of self-discovery and growth together!

Prompts	Your reflection
1. Write about some things you like about yourself. What are you good at? What makes you unique?	
2. What are some things you want to get better at this year? It could be anything from being a better teammate to improving your soccer skills.	
3. Think about a time when you felt happy, sad, excited, or angry during a game or activity. What caused you to feel that way?	
4. How do you usually handle big emotions like frustration or disappointment? Are there any strategies that help you calm down?	
5. Talk about a time when you took responsibility for something, like cleaning up after yourself or admitting when you made a mistake.	
6. Why is it important to take responsibility for your actions? How does it help you and those around you?	

Figure 1. Student reflective journal sample (self-assessment) for self-awareness skills.

Relationship Skills Checklist (*Formative: Peer assessment*)

Your Name:

Date:

Your Peer's Name:

Directions: This checklist will help you assess how well your classmates demonstrate relationship skills during our group activities. Pay close attention to how your classmates interact with others and mark “Yes” or “No” based on what you observe. Be honest and fair when completing the checklist. Your feedback will help your classmates improve their relationship skills.

Relationship Skill	Yes	No
Treats classmates with kindness and fairness		
Listens to others without interrupting		
Uses polite language and manners		
Works well with classmates in group activities		
Shares materials and takes turns		
Contributes ideas and helps others when needed		
Deals with disagreements peacefully and respectfully		
Listens to others' perspectives during conflicts		
Finds solutions that are fair and beneficial to all parties involved		
Understands and acknowledges others' feelings		
Includes classmates of all backgrounds and abilities		
Helps classmates who are feeling sad or left out		

Figure 2. Checklist sample (peer assessment) for relationship skills.

aligned with the TPSR model. This ensures that students are adequately prepared for the different types of assessments they will encounter. Additionally, teachers should provide ongoing feedback and opportunities for reflection to support students' personal growth (Wright, 2011). In the meantime, teachers need to be proactive about potential challenges, such as large class sizes (López-Pastor et al., 2013), time constraints (Lund & Veal, 2008), and lack of administrative support (Moura et al., 2021) when implementing these assessments to align with learning outcomes.

Utilizing TPSR Assessment to Strengthen SEL Competence in Different Settings

The ultimate goal of TPSR is to extend responsible behaviors beyond the PE setting. However, TPSR assessments utilized in school settings have predominantly neglected Level V, primarily due to the exclusive focus on student performance within the class (Wright, 2011). Consequently, there is an urgent need to assess the transference of responsible behaviors outside the gymnasium, at least regarding their cognitive awareness of such transfer. Several

Social Awareness Skills Qualitative Rubric *(Summative: Teacher-directed)*

Name:

Date:

Skill	Level 4 (Exemplary)	Level 3 (Proficient)	Level 2 (Basic)	Level 1 (Limited)
Identifying Emotions	Student consistently recognizes and accurately labels their own and others' emotions during activities and interactions.	Student usually identifies and correctly names their own and others' emotions during activities and interactions.	Student occasionally identifies their own and others' emotions during activities and interactions, but may struggle with accuracy.	Student rarely identifies their own and others' emotions during activities and interactions, and often demonstrates confusion or misunderstanding.
Empathy and Perspective-Taking	Student consistently demonstrates empathy by considering others' feelings and perspectives, and shows respect for diverse viewpoints.	Student usually demonstrates empathy by considering others' feelings and perspectives, and generally respects diverse viewpoints.	Student occasionally demonstrates empathy by considering others' feelings and perspectives, but may struggle to understand or accept diverse viewpoints.	Student rarely demonstrates empathy or consideration for others' feelings and perspectives, and often shows disregard for diverse viewpoints.
Cooperation and Collaboration	Student consistently collaborates with peers, communicates effectively, and contributes positively to group activities and discussions.	Student usually collaborates with peers, communicates effectively, and contributes positively to group activities and discussions.	Student occasionally collaborates with peers, communicates effectively, and contributes to group activities and discussions, but may struggle with consistency.	Student rarely collaborates with peers, communicates effectively, or contributes positively to group activities and discussions, often hindering progress or teamwork.
Respect and Inclusion	Student consistently shows respect for others, including classmates, teachers, and opponents, and actively includes others regardless of differences.	Student usually shows respect for others and includes classmates, teachers, and opponents, with occasional lapses.	Student occasionally shows respect for others and includes classmates, teachers, and opponents, but may struggle with consistency or inclusivity.	Student rarely shows respect for others or includes classmates, teachers, and opponents, often displaying exclusionary behavior or disrespect.
Conflict Resolution	Student consistently demonstrates effective conflict-resolution skills, such as active listening, compromise, and seeking mutually beneficial solutions.	Student usually demonstrates effective conflict-resolution skills, with occasional lapses or difficulties in applying strategies.	Student occasionally demonstrates effective conflict-resolution skills but may struggle with consistency or applying strategies in challenging situations.	Student rarely demonstrates effective conflict-resolution skills and often exacerbates conflicts or struggles to resolve them constructively.

Figure 3. Qualitative rubric sample (teacher directed) for social-awareness skills.

CASEL Competencies	Scenario	Soliciting Questions	Response to the Questions	Have you had similar experiences in other school subjects or in your personal life? What are the most effective ways to handle those situations?
Self-awareness	Mary often feels frustrated and irritable when working with others on a team project in PE.	Should she blame others and act impulsively? Why?		
		Should she take a moment to reflect on her emotion? What should she reflect upon?		
		What are some underlying reasons leading to her frustration?		
Social Awareness	Katlyn is a team leader in a team handball competition. A teammate on her team is quiet, displaying discomfort and unwillingness to participate.	If Katlyn is a qualified leader, should she ignore these signals and keep playing?		
		What should Katlyn do to help this student?		
		If you were on this team, how would you help this student?		
Self-management	Joey just experienced a big loss in an important game in PE and he is very frustrated.	Should he act impulsively and blame others for the loss? Why?		
		What should he do to better manage his emotions?		
Relationship Skills	Mat and Jack are on the same team playing a basketball game. There are 24 seconds left and they are tied in a game. During a timeout, Mat proposes taking a lay-up while Jack insists on attempting a three-point shot.	Should they work on their own without listening to each other's ideas? Why?		
		What should they do to resolve the conflict?		
Responsible Decision-making	Tim has an opportunity to score in a crucial soccer match at a clutch moment. However, James is in a better position than him.	Should Tim pass the ball to teammates or prioritize personal glory above team success and attempt to score?		
		How can one best demonstrate fair play and sportsmanship during game playing in PE?		

Figure 4. Example life scenarios to facilitate transfer (Level V in TPSR).

“ Specific TPSR assessment tools, including reflective journals, peer-assessment checklists, and teacher-directed rubrics, were provided to effectively evaluate students’ SEL progression within and beyond PE.

formal and informal assessment tools can be employed to strengthen SEL competencies in other domains of life and facilitate the application of responsible behaviors beyond the PE setting.

Informally, several assessment tools can be seamlessly integrated into the unique TPSR instructional format, particularly during relational time, group meetings, and reflection time. In relational time, starting with greetings with students and progressively building positive relationships with them, teachers can fully utilize opportunities before, during, and after class time to gather more information about events beyond the gym setting. Teachers are advised to be attentive listeners and gradually guide students in displaying SEL competencies in other settings by assisting them in navigating specific situations. Group meetings allow teachers to collect information informally about SEL incidents beyond the confines of PE. With permission from students, teachers can share these incidents with the class, fostering discussions on effective coping strategies for various circumstances. Additionally, teachers can devise imaginary scenarios and solicit appropriate responses from students. Last, self-reflection time can be utilized for students to contemplate and enhance their ability to effectively showcase SEL competencies in other areas of life.

Informal assessment can be easily transformed into formal assessment with minimal effort in the TPSR model

(Wright, 2011). The imaginary scenario utilized during group meetings can be formalized by requiring students to take time and document their responses in writing (see Figure 4). Moreover, a set of guiding questions employed in self-reflection to stimulate reflective thinking about the transfer of SEL competencies outside of PE can be applied by instructing students to document responses in a daily log or exit slip. Additionally, a periodic journal maintained by students would serve as a robust formal assessment tool to document skill transfer outside of class. Teachers can guide students to record the social and emotional skills they applied in other settings and describe them in detail in journals. To better facilitate the implementation of these assessments beyond the PE setting, PE teachers should consider collaborating closely with classroom teachers to use these assessment tools with all students, especially using the self-assessment format. This approach could allow students to self-monitor their responsible skill development and be mindful of their peers’ skill attainment as well.

Conclusion

This article explored the connections between the TPSR model and the five essential competencies of SEL, offering practical assessment tools for physical educators to enhance students’ SEL skills. Specific TPSR assessment tools, including reflective journals, peer-assessment checklists, and teacher-directed rubrics, were provided to effectively evaluate students’ SEL progression within and beyond PE. The article recommends that physical educators adopt evidence-based, assessment-driven practices to guide their teaching methods and support student learning.

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