



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING: A TOOLKIT FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

TABLE OF CONTENTS



<u>Purpose and Audience</u>	3
<u>Planning for SEL</u>	7
<u>Selecting Your Approach</u>	25
<u>Evaluating SEL Initiatives</u>	51

TOOLKIT PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

PURPOSE

Students need more than academic knowledge to do well in school—they must also be able to work well with others, understand and manage their emotions, and set and achieve goals. These abilities, also known as social-emotional learning (SEL) skills, are critical for improving students' academic achievement, decreasing problem behaviors, and increasing students' college and career readiness (Yoder, 2014; Jones, Crowley, and Greenberg, 2017).

Schools and districts can implement a wide range of strategies to foster students' social-emotional development. Educators can use this toolkit as a resource for understanding different approaches to support SEL, and planning for and implementing school- and district-wide SEL initiatives.

AUDIENCE

This toolkit can be used by:

- ☐ Regional education service agencies
- ☐ School district leaders
- ☐ School or district teams tasked with planning and implementing SEL programs
- ☐ Professional learning communities (PLCs)

BACKGROUND: DEFINING SEL

FIVE CORE COMPETENCIES



CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, categorizes SEL skills into five core competency areas (CASEL, n.d.):

- **Self-Awareness.** The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, values, strengths, and limitations, and how these characteristics influence one's behavior. Self-awareness skills include self-confidence, self-efficacy, and growth mindset.
- **Self-Management.** The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations, including stress-management and goal-setting skills.
- **Social Awareness.** The ability to empathize with others, understand behavioral norms, appreciate diversity, and show respect for others.
- **Relationship Skills.** The ability to communicate clearly, cooperate with others, negotiate conflict, and seek and offer help if needed.
- **Responsible Decision-Making.** The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions, reflect, solve problems, and evaluate the consequences of one's actions.

BACKGROUND: RATIONALE



WHY FOCUS ON SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING?

- **Improved academic achievement.** Studies have found that, on average, SEL programs result in an 11-percentile-point increase in academic achievement (Durlak et al., 2011).
- **Improved behavior.** SEL programs lead to significant increases in positive social behaviors and significant decreases in conduct problems and emotional distress (Durlak et al., 2011), and can help youth avoid risky behaviors such as substance use or violence (Jones, Crowley, and Greenberg, 2017).
- **Improved career readiness.** Employers increasingly rate “soft skills,” such as the ability to communicate well with others, solve problems, and prioritize work appropriately, as the most important traits needed in new employees (Dunham, 2017).
- **Cost-effective investment.** On average, each dollar invested in SEL can return the equivalent of \$11 in long-term benefits for students, families, and society (Jones, Crowley, and Greenberg, 2017).

OVERVIEW



This toolkit provides strategies and resources for:

- 1 Planning for SEL Initiatives**
- 2 Selecting Your Approach(es) to SEL**
- 3 Evaluating SEL Initiatives**

A 3D puzzle with a keyhole and a key, symbolizing planning and solutions. The puzzle pieces are metallic and interlocking. A key is inserted into the keyhole. A dark green rectangular overlay is positioned across the center of the image, containing the text 'PLANNING FOR SEL INITIATIVES' in white, bold, uppercase letters.


PLANNING FOR SEL INITIATIVES

OVERVIEW

Key steps in planning for SEL initiatives include:

 **DEVELOPING AN SEL VISION AND LEARNING STANDARDS.** Ensuring that stakeholders have a shared understanding of SEL goals.

 **CONDUCTING NEEDS ASSESSMENTS.** Measuring students' and staff's baseline knowledge and behaviors related to SEL, determining what SEL activities are currently being implemented in schools, and identifying gaps in current programming and resources.

 **BUILDING STAFF CAPACITY.** Providing initial and ongoing professional learning to ensure that staff have the skills needed to model SEL competencies and implement high-quality SEL initiatives.

 **ALIGNING RESOURCES.** Providing adequate time, staff, and funding to implement SEL initiatives.



SEL VISION AND LEARNING STANDARDS

VISION AND LEARNING STANDARDS

SEL VISION

When developing plans to implement or improve SEL, district leaders should draft a **vision statement or strategic plan** that clearly **defines the specific skills** the district hopes to influence.

A clear vision and definition for SEL helps all stakeholders understand the importance of SEL skills and how they align with priorities for student learning. Then, leaders can create SEL plans that identify the specific practices and strategies needed to achieve SEL goals.

Source: CASEL, n.d.

SEL LEARNING STANDARDS

K-12 SEL learning standards identify specific learning goals and benchmarks for student SEL at each grade level, articulating “what students should know and be able to do related to SEL.”

SEL learning standards can further help all stakeholders understand district SEL goals and develop strategies to achieve those goals.

The state of Connecticut has SEL learning standards for Grades K-3. Other states have developed learning standards for all grades.

RESOURCES FOR SEL PLANNING

EXAMPLE VISIONS AND STRATEGIC PLANS

- [Academic Social Emotional Learning Guidance Document](#) – Oakland Unified School District (CA)
- [SEL Mission Statement](#) – Metro Nashville Public Schools (TN)
- [SEL Vision and Mission](#) - Naperville Community Unit School District 203 (IL)
- [SEL Vision, Mission, and Goals](#) – Community Consolidated School District 181 (IL)
- [Strategic Plan](#) with SEL as a goal – Barrington 220 School District (IL)

EXAMPLE K-12 LEARNING STANDARDS

- [SEL Learning Standards](#) – Sandwich Public Schools (MA)
- [SEL Learning Standards](#) – Elementary and Secondary – Austin Independent School District (TX)
- [SEL Learning Standards and Benchmarks](#) – Intermediate District 287 (MN)
- [K-12 SEL Benchmarks](#) – Cambridge Public Schools (MA)



NEEDS ASSESSMENT

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

An initial needs assessment can help districts and schools collect baseline data on staff and students' SEL competencies. Needs assessments can also identify potential gaps in current resources and programs and help define areas for improvement. Leaders may wish to collect data on the following SEL-related areas:

STAFF SKILLS

STUDENT SKILLS

CURRICULUM AND
INSTRUCTION

PROGRAMS AND
STUDENT
SERVICES

DISTRICT AND
SCHOOL POLICIES

SCHOOL CLIMATE
AND PRACTICES
RELATED TO SEL

FAMILY AND
COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS

PROFESSIONAL
LEARNING

SCHOOL AND
DISTRICT
RESOURCES

Districts typically conduct needs assessments after defining the vision for district-wide SEL but before making resource allocation decisions or implementing new policies or programs.

Source: CASEL, n.d.

HANOVER RESEARCH'S SEL SURVEY

OVERVIEW

Districts can use Hanover Research's SEL survey to collect baseline data on:

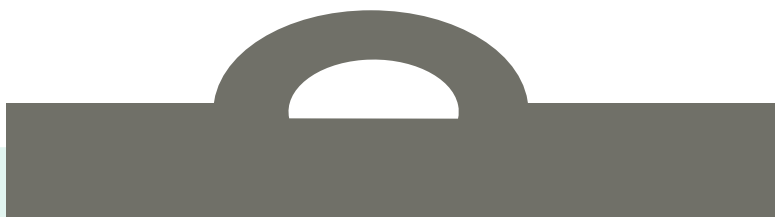
- **Grades 4-12 students' skills** in CASEL's five SEL areas (relationship skills, responsible decision-making, self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness). Hanover can also customize the SEL survey to assess additional SEL skills such as civic mindset, emotional well-being, growth mindset, and social support.
- **Parents' and staff's familiarity** with SEL competencies, **prioritization** of SEL, and **perceptions** of how the school and district have positively or negatively influenced SEL outcomes.
- **Instructional staff's ability** to use instructional strategies to develop students' SEL skills.

MEASURES - GROWTH MINDSET

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

- I can usually solve my problems.
- I keep trying, even when things are hard.
- I can make the best out of a bad situation.
- I am a hard worker.
- Challenging myself makes me smarter.
- I can learn from my mistakes.
- I feel confident in my ability to learn new things.
- If I'm not good at something, I'd rather quit.

OTHER NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOLS



ASSESSING STUDENT/STAFF SKILLS

- **Personal Assessment and Reflection Tool** – CASEL tool for teachers
- **Student and Teacher Surveys** – Surveys developed by TransformEd to measure SEL competencies for Grades 5-12 students in several California districts
- **Teacher Self-Assessment** – Tool designed by American Institutes for Research to assess teacher use of 10 teaching practices that support SEL
- **Washoe County School District SEL Competency Assessment** – Designed as an annual survey of SEL competencies for Grades 5-12 students

ASSESSING POLICIES & PRACTICES

- **Elementary and Secondary Interview Guides** – Tools for interviewing school staff to identify current SEL practices
- **School Strengths Inventory** – CASEL tool for assessing school-wide SEL and instruction, practices and policies, and family- and community partnerships
- **SEL School Capacity Survey** – Tool for identifying resource and professional learning needs
- **SEL Walkthrough Rubric** – Developed by Metro Nashville Public Schools and Anchorage School District to observe school and classroom environments



CAPACITY BUILDING

CAPACITY BUILDING

INITIAL TRAINING

Districts and schools should provide initial training to **build adults' SEL skills**. Trainings focused on building adults' skills are important because students learn SEL skills from watching how teachers model skills and respond to stressful and challenging situations.

Staff may also require initial training to understand what SEL is and what SEL skills students are expected to develop, how to promote SEL in and out of the classroom, and/or how to implement specific interventions or curricula.

ONGOING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Providing **ongoing** professional development (PD) is vital for building an environment that supports SEL and ensuring that SEL initiatives are implemented as intended. Common strategies for providing ongoing professional development include:

- **Coaching:** Coaches from within or outside the district observe a teacher's SEL practices or instruction, offer suggestions and reinforcement, and follow up on progress and development.
- **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):** Structured collaborations where educators meet regularly to analyze student data, share successful practices, and set goals.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Align Goals

Clearly align SEL goals with school and district priorities, and communicate clear expectations for what participants will learn in SEL PD.

Encourage Sharing

Ask participants to share personal experiences of how SEL has improved teaching, relationships with students, or school climate.

Don't Just Tell

Show staff how SEL works – e.g., model SEL behaviors, use SEL practices in staff meetings, and watch videos of staff teaching lessons.

Encourage Practice

Provide plenty of opportunities for staff to practice new skills in pairs or small groups and provide constructive feedback.

Provide Support

Throughout the year, provide ongoing support such as coaching, follow-up trainings, access to resources, and opportunities for observation.

Respect Staff's Time

Provide adequate time up-front and throughout the school year for lesson planning, coaching, and staff collaboration.

CAPACITY BUILDING RESOURCES

PRACTICAL RESOURCES


- [12 Strategies for Adult SEL Facilitation](#) – CASEL tip sheet for integrating SEL practices into professional learning
- [Professional Learning Communities Rubric](#) – Part of TransformEd's set of SEL tools for implementing SEL initiatives and measuring SEL skills
- [SEL Coaching Toolkit](#) – Coaching guide developed by American Institutes for Research
- [SEL Online Education Module](#) – 10-hour, free, online module to help educators, administrators, and school staff understand, designed by the Washington Office of Public Instruction

SEL RESEARCH AND CASE STUDIES

- [Key Insights from the Collaborating Districts Initiative](#) – Report describing lessons learned for SEL implementation from CASEL's partner districts
- [Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning](#) – Book edited by leading researchers in the SEL field, exploring rationale for focusing on SEL and issues in implementing and assessing SEL programs
- [Social and Emotional Learning: Why Students Need It. What Districts are Doing About It](#): Education First report on the various approaches districts have taken to implementing SEL initiatives

QUESTIONS FOR EXTERNAL TRAINERS

Developers of pre-packaged SEL curricula often providing training and technical assistance to schools/districts that purchase their program. Leaders should consider the following questions to determine whether trainings provided by external providers meet school/district staff's needs:

- 
- ☐ How much time is required? Who needs to attend the training?
 - ☐ Are there any prerequisites for participating in training?
 - ☐ Does the training include opportunities for participants to:
 - Practice using classroom materials and receive feedback?
 - Develop a plan with colleagues for implementing the program?
 - Use strategies such as morning meetings or a buddy system to establish a supportive classroom learning environment?
 - ☐ After the initial staff development workshop and a period of implementation, does the program offer on-site consultation to schools to observe teachers using the program and offer feedback, facilitate group discussions about the program, and/or facilitate teachers coaching one another?
 - ☐ Is there training for central office and building administrators on ways to support program implementation and sustainability?



ALIGNING RESOURCES

FUNDING

CASEL recommends developing a sustainable funding strategy that “can survive changes in leadership, politics, and the economy.” Districts typically fund SEL work through a combination of several sources:

- **Grants/donations** from private foundations and donors.
- **Reallocation of funds** within the existing operating budget.
- **Federal and state grants** (e.g., Title I and Title IV).

Source: Aperture Education, n.d.; CASEL, n.d.; Price, 2015

SUSTAINABILITY TOOL

CASEL's five-step [Financial Sustainability Planning Tool](#) includes resources for:

- Identifying staffing and resource needs for SEL.
- Building an SEL budget and identifying funding sources.

BUDGET PLANNING TOOL

CASEL's [SEL Budget Planning Tool](#) is a budget spreadsheet template to “design up to six years of budgets and funding sources.” It is designed to be used in conjunction with the financial sustainability planning tool.

DISTRICT CASE STUDIES

[Case studies](#) of districts in Austin, Chicago, Washoe County, and Wheaton-Warrenville provide examples of different approaches to funding and staffing SEL initiatives. Each case study includes a sample six-year budget.

STAFF

Districts have used a variety of staffing approaches to implement SEL initiatives. Some have employed one or more staff members **dedicated** to SEL (e.g., directors, coordinators, and specialists), while others **integrated** SEL into the responsibilities of the Assistant Superintendent and other district leaders, without hiring dedicated SEL staff.

INTEGRATED APPROACH

DEDICATED SEL STAFF



Wheaton-Warrenville

- 0.2 FTE equivalent of Asst. Supt. for Student Services
- SEL Design Team works with Asst. Supt. To support school sites

Washoe County

- 0.45 FTE SEL Coordinator
- 0.3 FTE admin. asst.
- SEL Specialist staffing based on student enrollment – 1.5 FTE in Year 1; 3.9 FTE in Year 6 of implementation

Chicago

- 1.0 FTE SEL director
- 4 SEL coordinators (based on student enrollment)
- 1.0 FTE SEL specialist for each of the districts 14 “networks”

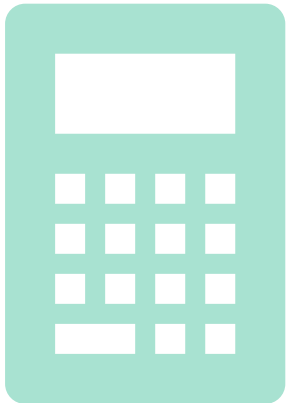
Austin

- 1.0 FTE SEL director
- 1.0 FTE admin. asst.
- 1.0 FTE curriculum specialist
- 1.0 FTE SEL specialist for each vertical team (one team per high school and feeder schools)
- 1.0 FTE parent specialist (Year 4)
- 0.28-1.0 FTE researcher

TOOL – COST CALCULATOR

CASEL's [SEL Cost Calculator](#) allows districts to estimate SEL costs based on the staffing models used by Austin, Chicago, Washoe, or Wheaton Warrenville. The calculator includes a [discussion guide](#) to guide conversation about various staffing and implementation approaches. To use the calculator, one must enter the following values into the tool:

- ☐ **Number of students in district**
- ☐ **Number of vertical teams/networks/units**
- ☐ **Salary and Benefits for:**
 - ☐ Assistant Superintendent
 - ☐ SEL Director
 - ☐ SEL Coordinator/Manager
 - ☐ SEL Specialist
 - ☐ Administrative Assistant



A 3D puzzle with a keyhole and a key. The puzzle pieces are metallic and have a brushed metal texture. One piece in the center has a keyhole, and a key is inserted into it. The key is also metallic and has a simple, modern design. The puzzle is set against a dark background, and the lighting creates highlights and shadows on the puzzle pieces, emphasizing their three-dimensional nature.

SELECTING YOUR APPROACH

4 APPROACHES TO SEL

Districts can build students' SEL skills using instructional and organization-level approaches. These SEL approaches are not mutually exclusive. Rather, schools and districts rely on a combination of approaches.

INSTRUCTIONAL



STANDALONE, EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION. Free-standing lessons that explicitly teach SEL competencies.



GENERAL INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES. Using practices, such as project-based learning and cooperative learning, to allow students to develop and practice SEL skills.



INTEGRATING SEL INTO THE ACADEMIC CURRICULUM. Incorporating SEL instruction into academic subjects such as English/language arts, math, social studies, and health/physical education.

ORGANIZATIONAL



FOSTERING A POSITIVE CLIMATE AND CULTURE. Creating school climates that support SEL development and ensuring that adult staff model SEL competencies both in and out of the classroom.



STANDALONE, EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION

COMMON INTERVENTIONS

Many schools and districts rely on externally developed, pre-packaged SEL interventions or curricula. These interventions often use more than one approach to promote SEL, such as combining explicit, standalone instruction with academic integration or school-wide approaches. Explicit, standalone instruction may encompass a wide variety of instructional strategies (see following page).

APPROACHES USED IN COMMON SEL INTERVENTIONS

Intervention	Standalone Instruction	General Teaching Practices	Integration with Academics	Organizational Approaches
4Rs	✓		✓	✓
Caring School Community		✓	✓	✓
Lions Quest	✓			
PATHS	✓		✓	✓
Positive Action	✓		✓	✓
Responsive Classroom		✓	✓	✓
RULER		✓	✓	✓
Sanford Harmony	✓			
Second Step	✓		✓	
Student Success Skills	✓	✓		✓

Source: Belfield et al., 2015; CASEL 2012, 2015; Grant et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2017b

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR EXPLICITLY TEACHING SEL SKILLS

PRACTICE	DESCRIPTION
Books/Stories	Teacher reads a book or story that illustrates a particular SEL theme.
Creative Projects	Students create art or a creative project related to an SEL theme.
Discussion	Discussions can occur in pairs, small groups, or as a class to introduce an SEL theme or prompt reflection about how the SEL theme relates to situations students face.
Didactic Instruction	Teacher provides specific instructions and models SEL skills.
Games	Games can reinforce an SEL theme and build community.
Kinesthetic	Activities involving student movement and physical activity can link SEL with motor functions (e.g., “Feelings Charades”).
Role-Playing	At younger ages, this may involve a teacher simulating an SEL skill. At older ages, it may involve the entire class role-playing in pairs or two students performing in front of the class.
Songs	Songs reinforce an SEL theme and involve dances, hand movements, or strategy practice.
Skills Practice	Students actively practice using SEL skills or strategies outside of a game or role-play scenario.
Tools/Handouts	Tools and handouts promote SEL strategies in a concrete way. For example, a “feelings thermometer” handout can support a lesson related to managing emotions.
Videos	Videos depict challenging situations and are used to prompt discussion around SEL topics.
Visual Displays	Teachers post charts, posters, or other visual displays related to SEL themes.
Vocabulary	Activities teach language, words, or terms related to an SEL concept.
Writing	Students write about personal experiences related to an SEL theme.
Other	Other practices to reinforce SEL include poetry, visualization exercises, and meditation.

Source: Jones et al., 2017b

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION TOOLKITS

TransformEd provides several toolkits for teaching specific SEL skills. These toolkits include slide presentations and facilitator guides for delivering self-contained professional development sessions to teachers. The toolkits also include examples of instructional activities to use for various grade levels.

- [Growth Mindset Toolkit](#)
- [Mindfulness Toolkit](#)
- [Self-Efficacy Toolkit](#)
- [Self-Management Toolkit](#)
- [Social Awareness Toolkit](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional instructional resources can be found from the following:

- [Sample Teaching Activities to Support Core Competencies](#) – CASEL guide with brief examples of SEL teaching activities
- [SEL Implementation Guidance](#) – Minnesota Department of Education guidance and sample activities for teaching 5 SEL competencies
- [SEL Lesson Plans](#) – Missouri Department of Education SEL lesson plans for Grades K-12
- [SEL Toolkit](#) – ACT for Youth toolkit for out-of-school youth development programs

“KERNELS OF PRACTICE”

Researchers at Harvard University are working to identify “kernels of practice” for teaching SEL, or low-burden strategies that target a specific behavior and can be taught quickly multiple times throughout the instructional day. In the future, researchers will publish a comprehensive “menu” of kernels that include materials and implementation guidance for instructional staff.

EXAMPLE KERNELS

Kernel	Description	SEL Domain Affected
Turtle technique for calming down	Using a turtle metaphor, child holds self, breathes through nose, and self-coaches him/herself to calm down	Managing emotions and behavior
Non-verbal transition cues	Visual, kinesthetic, and/or auditory cues to signal a need to shift attention or tasks in a specific, patterned way	Attention, cognitive flexibility, understanding social cues
Peer-to-peer written praise	Children write praise for peers and/or read praise aloud	Prosocial behavior, conflict resolution

Source: Jones et al., 2017a



GENERAL INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

10 TEACHING PRACTICES

Ten general teaching practices can support students' SEL development.

SOCIAL TEACHING PRACTICES

1. **Student-Centered Discipline.** Disciplinary strategies are developmentally appropriate for students.
2. **Teacher Language.** The teacher talks to students with a focus on encouraging them.
3. **Responsibility and Choice.** Students are provided opportunities to make responsible decisions.
4. **Warmth and Support.** The teacher creates a classroom where the students know that the teacher cares.

INSTRUCTIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES

5. **Cooperative Learning.** Students work together toward a collective goal in accomplishing an instructional task.
6. **Classroom Discussions.** Students and teachers have a dialogue about content.
7. **Self-Reflection and Self-Assessment.** Students actively think about their own work.
8. **Balanced Instruction.** Multiple and appropriate instructional strategies are used.
9. **Academic Press and Expectations.** The teacher provides meaningful and challenging work and believes that all students can achieve rigorous work.
10. **Competence Building.** The teacher helps develop students' social-emotional skills through the typical instructional cycle (e.g., correcting mistakes).

Source: Yoder and Gurke, 2017

OBSERVATIONAL RUBRIC

The American Institutes for Research's (AIR) [SEL Coaching Toolkit](#) provides an observational rubric to determine the degree to which the 10 general teaching practices are present in the classroom. Teachers and coaches can select one practice to focus on and use the rubric to guide reflection and conversation.

RUBRIC EXCERPT

Practice	Not Yet Present	Minimally Present	Moderately Present	Fully Present
Practice: Academic Press and Expectations				
Teacher practice: When fully implemented, students are given more challenging work once they have mastered easier material, ensuring that students feel responsible for their successes and failures and that they understand the connection between effort and results. The teacher supports students socially and emotionally while challenging them to achieve and surpass their goals.				
Student behaviors: When the teacher fully implements practices that reflect academic press and expectations, students feel a need to succeed as they work to master increasingly challenging material. Students understand that they are responsible for their academic outcomes and can analyze information to solve problems. They are able to identify and regulate their emotions when facing new challenges and barriers to success.				

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

AIR's [SEL Toolkit for Tennessee Teachers and Administrators](#) is an additional resource that schools can use to initiate conversations around integrating SEL-supportive instructional practices into the classroom. The toolkit includes discussion prompts for each of the 10 general teaching practices.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS: ACADEMIC PRESS AND EXPECTATIONS

- ✓ How do you know where each student's level of academic challenge is—and keep the student moving forward?
- ✓ How do you help students recognize the relationship between effort, challenge, and higher levels of achievement? What tells you that your students have understood the relationship between the effort they make and their ability to move to a higher level of achievement/ challenge?
 - How do you help students regulate their emotions (e.g., frustration) when they are presented with more rigorous content? Are students learning skills to manage their social or emotional responses to rigorous academic content?
- ✓ How do you help students feel responsible for accomplishing work that meets high expectations? How does the school culture support academic press and expectations?

WEBINAR: SEL IN THE CLASSROOM

The webinar [Social and Emotional Learning in the Daily Life of Classrooms](#), developed by the American Institutes for Research and Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, can assist district leaders and regional technical assistant providers in:

- Deepening knowledge and skills for integrating SEL into policies and planning.
- Identifying connections between SEL, the Common Core State Standards, and teacher evaluation and professional development systems.
- Learning strategies for supporting school leaders in guiding teachers' to reflect on their own teaching practices and SEL competencies.



INTEGRATING SEL INTO ACADEMICS

SEL & ENGLISH INSTRUCTION

Examples of activities for integrating SEL and English/language arts instruction are listed below.

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

- Use literature as an opportunity to teach about resolving conflicts.
- Teach students to give and receive constructive feedback (e.g., on peers' writing or public speaking).

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

- Ask students to write essays about ethics, values, honesty, etc.
- Discuss situations in literature in terms of whether decisions made by characters are ethical.

SELF-AWARENESS

- Use a novel or short story to discuss how feelings affect behaviors.
- Have students complete a project (essay or media project) to identify their own personal interests, strengths, and weaknesses.

SELF-MANAGEMENT

- Define perseverance as a vocabulary word.
- Use literature to discuss how characters persevered through hard times to turn their lives around and reach a goal.

SOCIAL AWARENESS

- Use literature to help students understand the feelings and perspectives of people in various cultures.
- Celebrate historical figures and characters from literature who resisted stereotypes or worked to promote justice and equality.

SEL & MATH INSTRUCTION

Examples of activities for integrating SEL and math instruction are listed below.

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

- Teach lessons on how to ask a peer or teacher for help. Brainstorm and practice ways to say “thank you” and apologize when frustration with an assignment is expressed inappropriately.

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

- Use simple data analysis (in graphs and tables) to examine larger-scale issues such as the amount of paper waste in the neighborhood or money spent on electronics every year.

SELF-AWARENESS

- Encourage students to use mathematical representations to elaborate on personal interests, strengths, and weaknesses (for example, “Graph what you feel like over the course of the day.”).

SELF-MANAGEMENT

- Teach students a lesson on how to use certain equipment (such as computers or iPads) and other resources appropriately and how to put equipment away.

SOCIAL AWARENESS

- Organize a class service project to examine and address a community issue. Use math to examine the issue and develop a budget and timeline for a service project.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS

The book [Integrating SEL Into Your Curriculum: Practical Lesson Plans for Grades 3–5](#) provides lesson plans for teachers of math, ELA, science, and social studies, and [Integrating SEL Into Your Curriculum: Practical Lesson Plans for Grades 6–8](#) provides lesson plans for integrating SEL into the ELA curriculum.

SAMPLE LESSONS

The University of Texas at Austin has developed three example lessons of how to integrate SEL instruction into Common Core-aligned instruction in math. These lessons, designed for Grade 9 students, include: [“Conference Tables”](#) task, [“Printing Tickets”](#) task, and [“Swimming Pool”](#) task.

SEL CURRICULA/INTERVENTIONS

A number of curricula integrate SEL instruction with academic content: [4Rs](#): ELA, Grades Pre-K-5; [Agile Mind](#): Math and Science/Biology (Grades 6-12); [Expeditionary Learning](#): ELA, Grades K-8; Life Science, Grades 3-5; Social Studies, Grades 6 and 9; [Facing History and Ourselves](#): Social Studies, Grades 6-12; [Peekapak](#): ELA, Grades Pre-K-3.

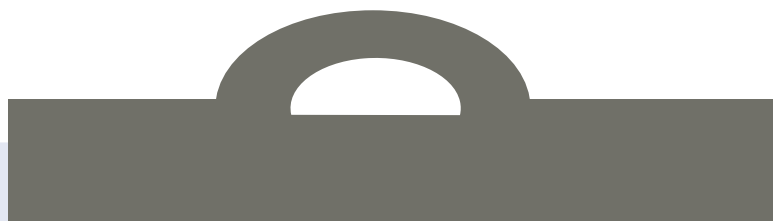
RESOURCES FROM OTHER DISTRICTS

San Francisco Unified School District's math curriculum is taught from a [growth mindset perspective](#), and students participate in a “how to learn math” class to learn about their “own potential to succeed and the strategies needed to approach math effectively. Teachers can participate in a free “growth mindset for math” course and have access to a set of [online lessons](#) to learn about promoting growth mindset in the mathematics classroom.



***HOW-TO:* SELECT PRE-PACKAGED CURRICULA**

ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS



DISTRICT STAKEHOLDERS that may be involved in SEL program selection include:

- ☐ Central office leaders
- ☐ Building administrators
- ☐ Staff from curriculum/instruction, professional development, student support, research/evaluation, and finance departments
- ☐ School board members
- ☐ Community members

SCHOOL-LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS that may be involved in SEL program selection include:

- ☐ Building administrators
- ☐ Teachers
- ☐ Counselors, psychologists, and/or social workers
- ☐ Non-professional staff
- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Students

DEVELOP SELECTION CRITERIA

When selecting pre-packaged SEL interventions, districts typically consider the following criteria:

ALIGNMENT

- **Needs** of students and how well the program or practice might fit with identified needs.
- **Fit** with current initiatives, priorities, structures, supports, and parent/community values and program's cultural and linguistic relevance.

COSTS AND RESOURCES

- **Resources needed** for training, staffing the program, technology supports, curricula, monitoring and assessment, and administration.
- **Resources available** for implementing the program, including initial training and ongoing technical assistance.
- **School/district capacity** to implement the program as intended.

EVIDENCE

- **Quality and number of research studies** indicating that the intervention/curriculum, if implemented as intended, will result in measurable changes in SEL outcomes for the grade level and student population targeted.

Source: CASEL, 2012, 2015; School District of Palm Beach County, n.d.

GATHER INFORMATION

PROGRAM DEVELOPERS

School or district teams can visit program websites or directly contact program developers in order to:

- Review curricula and sample materials
- Watch videos of instruction
- Review technical information
- Gather information about program costs and implementation supports (e.g., on-site training or coaching).

THIRD PARTIES

School or district teams should review research studies of pre-packaged SEL programs to ensure that selected programs are evidence-based.

- Several third-party organizations provide program guides that rate the quality of evidence supporting a SEL programs for Pre-K, elementary, middle, and high school students (listed on the following page).

OTHER DISTRICTS

After narrowing the list of potential SEL programs, leaders may wish to contact other schools or districts using the program(s) to learn about their experience.

- In-person visits can allow decision-makers to observe a program in action.
- Telephone interviews are also an option for learning more about a program if in-person visits are not feasible.

Source: CASEL, 2012

PROGRAM SELECTION RESOURCES

The below program guides and research studies can assist school and district leaders in reviewing the evidence that supports pre-packaged SEL interventions and identifying programs that fit with district needs and priorities.

PROGRAM GUIDES

- [CASEL Program Guide](#) - Review of evidence-based preschool and elementary programs
- [CASEL Program Guide](#) - Review of evidence-based middle and high school programs
- [Harvard Graduate School of Education Guide](#) - Review of 25 leading SEL programs
- [Head Start Consumer Report](#) - Review of preschool curricula

KEY SEL RESEARCH

- [2011 meta-analysis](#) of 213 school-based, K-12 SEL programs
- [2017 meta-analysis](#) of long-term effects of 82 K-12 SEL programs
- [2015 study](#) of the economic benefits of SEL



ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACHES

ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACHES

In learning environments that support SEL: Discipline policies limit exclusionary practices (e.g., suspensions) and encourage students to regulate their behavior; adults communicate high expectations for behavior and model SEL skills in and out of the classroom; leaders ensure that each student has an adult they can turn to for assistance; and staff encourage students to be active members of the school community.

Many district initiatives can foster supportive environments and encourage the development of SEL skills, such as:

SCHOOL CLIMATE
INITIATIVES

RESTORATIVE
JUSTICE

SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT
PLANS

MULTI-TIERED
SYSTEMS OF
SUPPORT

COLLEGE AND
CAREER READINESS
EFFORTS

COUNSELING AND
MENTAL HEALTH
SERVICES

OUT-OF-SCHOOL
TIME PROGRAMS

EQUITY INITIATIVES

TRAUMA-
INFORMED
PRACTICES

Source: CASEL, n.d.; Kendziora and Yoder, 2016; Simmons, Brackett, and Adler, 2018

INFUSING SEL THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT

Districts can reinforce SEL skills and norms by infusing SEL into various district- and school-level policies and practices.

- Incorporate SEL into the district vision and/or strategic plan
- Develop an SEL board policy
- Implement restorative discipline policies
- Develop SEL learning standards and indicators for students
- Incorporate SEL into teacher evaluation frameworks or performance standards

POLICIES AND PLANS

LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

DAILY PRACTICES

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Embed SEL ipractices into regular meetings and professional learning
- Provide resources for parents on how to support SEL at home.
- Help parents build their own SEL skills

SPOTLIGHT – OAKLAND

THREE SIGNATURE PRACTICES

Oakland Unified School District has identified three “signature SEL practices” that are incorporated into staff’s regular meetings and professional learning experiences. These practices establish norms that “create conditions for growth and learning.”

1. WELCOMING RITUAL

- *Rationale:* Ritual openings establish predictability, support contribution by all, set norms for listening, and allow people to connect.
- *Examples:* Check-in with each participant with a sentence starter like, “A success I recently had...” or “One norm I will hold today is...”; Use an open-ended question as a community-building activity, having participants share their responses with a partner.

2. ENGAGING PRACTICES

- *Rationale:* Engaging practices foster positive relationships and collaboration between participants.
- *Examples:* Short periods of silent think time before sharing; think-pair-share; “brain breaks;” pair, small group, and whole group interactions.

3. OPTIMISTIC CLOSURE

- *Rationale:* Creates momentum for taking action.
- *Examples:* Encourage participants to reflect on/respond to the following: “What are my next steps?”; “Who do I want to connect with about this topic?”; “I’m eager to learn more about...”.



WEBINAR: SEL & DISTRICT POLICIES

The webinar [Integrating Social-Emotional Learning Into State and District Policies](#), developed by CASEL, the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, the National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning, and the Pacific Comprehensive Center discusses approaches that states and districts have taken to integrate SEL into policies and initiatives. Approaches discussed in the webinar include:

- **Metro Nashville's** approach to integrating SEL into curricular reforms.
- The work **DuPage County** (IL) has done to connect SEL to the Common Core and to district evaluation system.
- The **Kansas State Department of Education's** approach to developing SEL and character development standards and using these standards in the school accreditation process.



EVALUATING SEL INITIATIVES

PROCESS AND OUTCOME EVALUATION

PROCESS EVALUATION

Process evaluation refers to evaluating *how* a program has been implemented. This may include:

- **Fidelity:** Whether programs are implemented as intended or whether teachers are implementing new instructional practices
- **Dose and Reach:** E.g., number of lessons delivered and number of students who participate
- **Stakeholder perceptions**
- **Context:** Resources, training, and other factors that influenced implementation.

Process evaluation can inform continuous improvement efforts and help to explain why a program may or may not be reaching its goals.

OUTCOME EVALUATION

Outcome evaluation refers to assessing whether a program or initiative has achieved its intended objectives or outcomes.

In the case of SEL programs, this generally means assessing whether a program or initiative has led to the intended **student outcomes** or goals identified in the planning process.

Leaders should communicate outcome evaluation results to relevant stakeholders (e.g., school principals, instructional staff).

PROCESS EVALUATION RUBRIC

Austin Independent School District uses a comprehensive [SEL Implementation Rubric](#) to evaluate implementation of SEL initiatives. SEL coaches meet with school principals annually to rate SEL implementation on 10 domains:

- Weekly explicit SEL instruction;
- Implementation of peacemaking process;
- SEL integration;
- Community engagement; and
- Principal communication of SEL integration.
- Principal/SEL specialist meetings;
- Monthly SEL facilitator/specialist meeting;
- SEL professional development/training;
- Steering committee; and
- Collaborative classroom visits.

RUBRIC EXCERPT

Domain	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Weekly Explicit SEL Instruction	30 minutes per week using curriculum and resources provided by district – 10% of staff implementing	30% of staff implementing	50% of staff implementing	70% of staff implementing	90% of staff implementing
SEL Integration	Integration of SEL strategies or skills in instruction – evident in 10% of classrooms and common areas during campus visits	Evident in 30% of classrooms and common areas	Evident in 50% of classrooms and common areas	Evident in 70% of classrooms and common areas	Evident in 90% of classrooms and common areas

SEL OUTCOMES & MEASUREMENT

Districts may choose to directly measure students' SEL skills and behaviors, and/or may choose to use academic and behavior outcomes as proxies for SEL skills.

OUTCOMES

Direct Measures:

- Directly observing or assessing SEL behaviors or competencies such as relationship skills, self-management, decision-making, etc.

Academic & Behavioral Proxies

- Academic achievement, attendance, discipline outcomes, graduation rates
- School climate outcomes

MEASUREMENT METHODS



- **Observational tools** (e.g., [Behavior Assessment System for Children \(BASC\)](#)).
- **Surveys or assessments** where students *self-report* their SEL skills or *teachers/parents provide ratings* of students' skills (e.g., Hanover's SEL survey, TransformEd [SEL survey](#), [Devereux Student Strengths Assessment \(DESSA\)](#)).



- **Student records**, i.e., academic, discipline, and attendance data already included in student information systems.
- **Data from school climate surveys**

Sources: American Institutes for Research, 2015c; CASEL, n.d.; Denham, Ji, and Hamre, 2010; Education Week Research Center, 2015; Hanover interviews with district SEL leaders; Melnick, Cook-Harvey, and Darling-Hammond, 2017; Rennie Center for Education Research, 2015; Krachman, Arnold, and Larocca, 2016

SELECTING OUTCOMES TO MEASURE

California's CORE districts (a set of large, urban school districts developing new school accountability measures) have selected four key SEL competencies to measure on an annual basis: growth mindset (sub-skill of self-awareness), self-efficacy (sub-skill of self-awareness), self-management, and social awareness.

The districts identified these competencies based on three key principles—assessed skills must be meaningful, measurable, and malleable.

MEANINGFUL

- A particular competency is predictive of important academic, career, and life outcomes.

MEASURABLE

- The competency can be measured reliably through valid assessments that are feasible to administer at scale in schools.

MALLEABLE

- There is research showing that the competency can be developed in a school setting.

Source: Krachman, Arnold, and Larocca, 2016

SELECTING MEASUREMENT TOOLS

ALIGNMENT

Do the items measured by the tool align with the district's goals and the district's definition of success in SEL? The tool that a district selects should align with the specific skills students are expected to develop.

EASE OF USE

Is the tool designed in a way that makes it easy to use and understand by both students and teachers? Does the school/district have the technological infrastructure needed to use the tool?

COST AND TIME

Is the tool free or must it be purchased? Does the tool require teachers to assess students individually or as a group? How much time and resources are required to train teachers and staff on collecting and analyzing data?

RELIABILITY & VALIDITY

Reliability refers to consistency (whether the same population would receive the same score if they took the test again under similar circumstances), while validity refers to whether an assessment what it claims to be measuring.

ACTIONABLE DATA

Tools should provide information that is valuable and actionable for teachers and administrators (e.g., to improve instruction or address students' behaviors in the classroom).

FAIRNESS & ETHICS

Does the assessment measure the same skills for all participants? Are assessments accessible or adaptable for students with disabilities? Are there any risks to participants if they participate in the new assessments?

Source: American Institutes for Research, 2015a, 2015b; Krachman, Arnold, and Larocca, 2016; Soland, Hamilton, and Stecher, 2015; Walker, Olson, and Herman, n.d.

TOOL SELECTION RESOURCES

The following guides provide an overview of observation tools and teacher, student, and parent surveys that districts can use to measure SEL outcomes. These guides provide information about factors such as tools' reliability and validity, SEL constructs measured, alignment with CASEL's five competency areas, grade level, administration time, and cost.

- [Are You Ready to Assess Social and Emotional Development? Tools Index](#) (American Institutes for Research)
- [A Compendium of Social and Emotional Competency Measures](#) (Strive Together)
- [Compendium of Preschool Through Elementary School Social-Emotional Learning and Associated Assessment Measures](#) (CASEL and University of Illinois at Chicago)
- [Measuring Quality: Assessment Tools to Evaluate Your Social-Emotional Learning Practices](#) (Partnership for Children and Youth)
- [Social-Emotional Learning Assessment Measures for Middle School Youth](#) (Raikes Foundation)
- In addition, CASEL will be releasing an [Assessment Guide for Educators](#) in late 2018.



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