



INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES ON IMPROVING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND OUTCOMES

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NATIONAL CENTER

REGION 6

Informational Resources on Improving Social and Emotional Learning and Outcomes

This resource document was developed because the area of improving students' social and emotional outcomes is of such interest to so many (and the reports/publications/online resources are so numerous). This document attempts to organize the information into nine categories for more streamlined sense-making. The nine categories are listed under two broad headings:

- I. What is SEL?
- II. How is SEL being implemented?

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Because the area of improving students' social and emotional outcomes is of such interest to so many (and the reports/publications/online resources are so numerous), this document attempts to organize the information into categories for more streamlined sense-making. In generating this reading/resource list, we started with a searchable database of resources at the Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety (a U.S. Department of Education-funded national center at WestEd; see selcenter.wested.org/resources/). We expanded this list as other resources were referenced by initial documents and then as several experts in the SEL area suggested additional references to include. The reports/resources are free and easily accessible online (links provided).

We created nine categories below to make the reading/resource list easier to use. In describing the reports/resources, we used the language from the reports or websites as a brief introduction so readers can decide if they want to examine them further. (The italicized text is taken from the resource described.) This reading/resource list is not intended to be exhaustive; rather, it is a means for educators to orient themselves to current informational resources — in a sense, an annotated bibliography. It is also not intended as a formal literature review of the published literature on this topic. Instead, it is an attempt to organize, for easy access, the multitude of online reports and resources on this topic. A district or school improvement team or a teacher-led professional learning community could use this reading/reference list as a way of grounding themselves in a common language, vocabulary, and level of understanding on this important topic of social and emotional learning.

The nine categories, listed A-I under two headings, are shown below.

What is SEL?	How is SEL being implemented?
 A. Resources for Understanding and Prioritizing SEL Competencies	 D. Resources on District Initiatives to Improve SEL Outcomes
 B. Resources for Measuring SEL Competencies	 E. Resources on School Initiatives to Improve SEL Outcomes
 C. Resources on Evidence-Based SEL Programs/Interventions	 F. Resources on Classroom-Level SEL Implementation
	 G. Applying an Equity Lens to SEL Supports
	 H. Applying SEL Supports to School Reopening during the COVID-19 Pandemic
	 I. National SEL Reports/Resources for States

I. What is SEL?

The following resources are described in this first section.

A. Resources for Understanding and Prioritizing SEL Competencies	B. Resources for Measuring SEL Competencies	C. Resources on Evidence-Based SEL Programs/Interventions
<p>A1. SEL Frameworks: What and Why (website)</p> <p>A2. Explore SEL—Harvard Easel Lab’s Explore SEL (website)</p> <p>Three SEL Framework examples:</p> <p>A3. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)—Framework for Social and Emotional Learning (website)</p> <p>A4. Building Blocks for Learning: A Framework for Comprehensive Student Development (Stafford-Brizard, Turnaround for Children, 2016)</p> <p>A5. Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework (Nagaoka et al., University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, 2015)</p>	<p>B1. Measuring SEL: AWG Assessment Guide at CASEL (website/interactive tool)</p> <p>B2. RAND Education Assessment Finder (website)</p> <p>B3. Are you Ready to Assess Social and Emotional Learning and Development? (AIR, 2019)</p> <p>B4. SEL Assessment to Support Effective Social Emotional Learning Practices at Scale (McKown & Herman, Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center at Penn State, 2020)</p>	<p>C1. 2013 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs—Preschool and Elementary School Edition (CASEL, 2012)</p> <p>C2. 2015 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs—Middle and High School Edition (CASEL, 2015)</p> <p>C3. Social and Emotional Interventions under ESSA—Evidence Review (Grant et al., RAND Corporation, 2017)</p> <p>C4. Investing in Evidence Based Social and Emotional Learning: Companion Guide to Social and Emotional Learning Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review (Wrabel, Hamilton, Whitaker, & Grant, RAND Corporation, 2018)</p> <p>C5. Navigating SEL from the Inside Out: Looking Inside & Across 25 Leading SEL Programs: A Practical Resource for Schools and OST Providers (Elementary School Focus) (Jones et al., Harvard Graduate School of Education Easel Lab, 2017)</p> <p>C6. Preparing for Effective SEL Implementation (Jones, Bailey, Brush, & Kahn, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Easel Lab, 2018)</p> <p>C7. Kernels of Practice for SEL: Low-Cost, Low-Burden Strategies (Jones, Bailey, Brush, & Kahn, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2017)</p>

A. Resources for Understanding and Prioritizing SEL Competencies

A1. SEL Frameworks: What and Why (website)

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was formed in 1994 with the goal of establishing high-quality, evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) as an essential part of education, preschool through high school. The CASEL website provides a set of Frameworks Briefs (e.g., one is entitled **SEL Frameworks — What Are They and Why Are They Important?** measuringcel.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Frameworks-A.1.pdf) that explain the importance of starting with a clear articulation of what SEL means for the particular school or district initiative. They define a framework as a “tool that helps organize ideas in order to provide a foundation for thinking, communicating, and acting.” They suggest that SEL frameworks can come in various forms, such as theories, models showing graphically how pieces fit together, taxonomies or rubrics, and lists, and describe why it is important to be clear about the framework used in starting an SEL initiative.

Another document in this series entitled **Guide to Reviewing and Rating SEL Frameworks: An Introduction to the Descriptive Series** (measuringcel.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/AWG-Framework-Series-B-Intro.pdf) describes nine SEL Frameworks and ways to compare them.

Finding a useful framework can provide a foundation for SEL implementation, assessment, and improvement efforts. Yet the number of SEL frameworks continues to grow. In a recent review, Berg and colleagues (2017) identified 136 different SEL-related frameworks. The existence of so many frameworks can cause confusion, and selecting a framework that works for your context and population can be challenging. This is why the Assessment Work Group developed Ten Criteria for Describing and Selecting SEL Frameworks. These 10 criteria are meant to guide thinking about what characteristics of an SEL framework are most important to your specific work or context and help you prioritize what you want and need from an SEL framework.

The nine frameworks in the Descriptive Series were chosen based on their recurring presence in research and practice. We compared the list of SEL-related frameworks in the American Institutes for Research (AIR)’s study Identifying, Defining, and Measuring Social and Emotional Competencies, and the list of frameworks identified or coded in the Taxonomy Project by the EASEL Lab at Harvard University. We also asked members of the ever growing Measuring SEL Collaborator Network (currently more than 3,300 members) to let us know which frameworks they knew about or were using in their work. The survey to the network asked about 32 specific frameworks with options to fill in others. More than 200 members responded. The frameworks that appeared multiple times on these three lists are included in this series as illustrations. They are neither endorsements nor recommendations for use.

1. Character Lab’s Tripartite Taxonomy of Character
2. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)’s Framework for Systemic Social Emotional Learning
3. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)’s Conceptual Framework for the Study on Social and Emotional Skills
4. Search Institute’s Developmental Assets Framework
5. Forum for Youth Investment’s Preparing Youth to Thrive
6. Institute for Habits of Mind’s Habits of Mind
7. University of Chicago Consortium on School Research’s Foundations for Young Adult Success
8. Partnerships in Education and Resilience (PEAR) Institute’s Clover Model
9. P21 and Battelle for Kids’s Framework for 21st Century Learning

A2. [Harvard Easel Lab's Explore SEL \(website\)](#)

Another website, developed by the Harvard University Graduate School of Education Easel Lab, called **Explore SEL**, helps educators and others navigate/compare and contrast various SEL frameworks and competencies as described below.

***Explore SEL** is designed as a navigator for the field of social and emotional learning. We provide information and tools that summarize and connect the major frameworks and skills in the field to support transparency and informed decision-making.*

What is SEL? Social and emotional learning (SEL) has often been used as an umbrella term to represent a wide array of non-academic skills that individuals need in order to set goals, manage behavior, build relationships, and process and remember information. These skills and competencies develop across our lives and are essential to success in school, work, home, and community. Generally speaking, this set of skills can be organized into three interrelated areas: cognitive, social, and emotional. Importantly, these skills and competencies develop and are in dynamic interaction with attitudes, beliefs, and mindsets as well as character and values, all of which are fundamentally tied to characteristics of settings.

How can this site help? The tools and resources on this site support exploring, connecting, and comparing SEL and non-academic frameworks and skills to build a broader and deeper understanding of SEL and related fields, to grow clarity and transparency, and to enable users to select a framework to guide their SEL work, and much more.

Three SEL Framework examples:

A3. [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)—Framework for Social and Emotional Learning \(website\)](#)

CASEL's framework outlines five Core SEL competencies.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) enhances students' capacity to integrate skills, attitudes, and behaviors to deal effectively and ethically with daily tasks and challenges. Like many similar frameworks, CASEL's integrated framework promotes intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competence. There are five core competencies that can be taught in many ways across many settings. Many educators and researchers are also exploring how best to assess these competencies.

Self-awareness: *The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.*

Self-management: *The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.*

Social awareness: *The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.*

Relationship skills: *The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.*

Responsible decision-making: *The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.*

A4. Building Blocks for Learning: A Framework for Comprehensive Student Development (Stafford-Brizard, Turnaround for Children, 2016)

Turnaround For Children's (www.turnaroundusa.org/) Building Blocks for Learning Framework describes skills and mindsets critical for success in school and beyond. The Framework was developed to reflect research across diverse scientific fields and *"includes foundational skills and mindsets (such as self-regulation, attachment, self- and social awareness and stress management) that lay the groundwork for higher order skills and mindsets (such as resilience and agency)."* The authors reflect on why SEL competencies are so important:

Currently, the U.S. education system draws from a rigorous and well-developed set of academic standards for learning, which focus on what children should know and be able to do. However, success in the classroom and beyond relies on much more than mastery of these academic standards. If academic standards are what students need to learn, there are also skills and mindsets that prepare and support how students learn. Successful engagement in the classroom and in life relies on a set of cognitive and social-emotional skills and mindsets, which are not represented in academic standards.

When students face adversity and stress in their home environment and/or fail to access a quality early childhood education, the development of cognitive and social-emotional skills and mindsets is at risk. Thus, K-12 design must ensure that instruction, supports and assessments are in place to address this potential skill gap in school-age students. Currently, many schools are designed with the assumption that critical skills for learning are in place upon entry into K-12, leaving many students without the attention or support they need to develop as learners. All students, regardless of socioeconomic background, need these cognitive and social-emotional skills and mindsets to engage and thrive in school.

When educators neither prioritize these skills and mindsets nor integrate them with academic development, students are left without tools for engagement or a language for learning. They become dependent on adult-driven procedures and routines rather than their own skills and motivation. To deliver the education all students deserve – one that prepares them for the lives they choose – the U.S. education system must address the essential elements of student development beyond academics. When students matriculate through K-12 without the skills necessary to engage in learning, they can't process the vast amount of instruction that comes their way each day and it becomes daunting, if not impossible, to stay on track. This is the achievement gap.

A5. Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework (Nagaoka et al., University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, 2015)

This Framework takes a developmental approach in describing SEL competencies underlying young adult success. They describe four foundational components that children need to build through their developmental experiences. The four components are (1) self-regulation, (2) knowledge and skills, (3) mindsets, and (4) values:

- *Self-Regulation includes awareness of oneself and one's surroundings, and managing one's attention, emotions, and behaviors in goal-directed ways.*

- Knowledge is sets of facts, information, or understanding about self, others, and the world. Skills are the learned ability to carry out a task with intended results or goals and can be either general or domain-specific.
- Mindsets are beliefs and attitudes about oneself, the world, and the interaction between the two. They are the lenses we use to process everyday experience.
- Values are enduring, often culturally-defined, beliefs about what is good or bad and what is important in life. Values serve as broad guidelines for living and provide an orientation for one's desired future.

This framework synthesizes decades of research evidence, practice wisdom, and theory to capture a holistic view of children's developmental needs from early childhood to young adulthood. Whether at home or school, in an afterschool program, or out in their community, young people are always developing. Broader societal contexts, systems, and institutions shape youth development — often creating big disparities in opportunities and outcomes. Adults also play a pivotal role, and can give young people a better chance at successful lives by understanding and intentionally nurturing their development.

Also see an infographic which provides a model of how the focus on the four foundational components (outlined above) changes as students develop. For example, self-regulation is shown as a critical developmental focus in early and middle childhood, with mindsets a critical developmental focus in middle grades, and values a critical focus in high school.

consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2019-01/Wallace-Infographic.pdf

B. Resources for Measuring SEL Competencies

As important as it is for schools and districts to be clear on targeted core SEL competencies, given varying school contexts and levels (elementary, middle and high school), it is also critical to use data to continuously monitor students' progress towards desired SEL outcomes (starting with initial needs assessments). The resources in this section provide free online tools to navigate the SEL measurement and assessment options.

B1. Measuring SEL: AWG Assessment Guide at CASEL (website/interactive tool)

The AWG Assessment Guide, found on the CASEL **Measuring SEL** website, is an online tool that helps educators select and effectively use popular SEL student assessments.

The Assessment Guide provides several resources for practitioners to select and use measures of student SEL, including guidance on how to select an assessment and use student SEL data, a catalog of SEL assessments equipped with filters and bookmarking, and real-world accounts of how practitioners are using SEL assessments.

There is also a downloadable complementary practice guide, entitled **Choosing and Using SEL Competency Assessments: What Schools and Districts Need to Know**, found at measuringcel.casel.org/pdf/practitioner-guidance.pdf that provides support to educators in thinking through the process of collecting data on SEL competencies.

B2. RAND Education Assessment Finder (website)

This searchable database lists more than 200 assessments of interpersonal, intrapersonal and higher-order cognitive competencies. This repository allows for searching of different types of assessments to learn what each tool is designed to measure, the demands each assessment places on students and

teachers, and validity and reliability evidence available. According to information on the RAND website, the RAND Assessment Finder differs from the above AWG Assessment Guide as follows:

The AWG Assessment Guide and RAND Assessment Finder are complementary tools. The SEL Assessment Guide provides information most relevant to educators for implementing measures (e.g., training and developer supports) and focuses on measures known to be currently used in practice.

The RAND Assessment Finder features a broader scope in its review, including measures used primarily in research. The Finder also offers more information about the kinds of reliability and validity evidence available for a given measure, based on reviews of published research. For measures that are included in both the Guide and the Finder, both resources link to each other, so that users may benefit from the strengths of both tools.

B3. Are you Ready to Assess Social and Emotional Learning and Development? (AIR, 2019)

The suite of resources called “Ready to Assess” available on the AIR website include the following:

- Brief entitled: **Are You READY TO ASSESS Social and Emotional Learning and Development?** (www.air.org/sites/default/files/SEL-Ready-to-Assess-Stop-2019.pdf) which invites users to “STOP” and learn about the evolving SEL landscape. Introduces implementation readiness and conditions that foster SEL and development.
- **Decision Tree**
Helps schools and organizations that are ready to assess to “THINK” about whether and how to use assessments with the development and critical appraisal of an assessment plan.
- **Tools Index**
Empowers users to “ACT” with confidence to choose from a list of selected assessment tools identified by AIR to explore conditions for learning and development and social and emotional competencies.

The **Tools Index** (www.air.org/sites/default/files/SEL-Ready-to-Assess-Act-2019-rev.pdf) is organized into two categories of assessments:

1. Measures of learning conditions (i.e., school climate, SEL implementation, and program quality) in and out of school (see pages 2-50).
2. Available SE competency assessments to reflect updates to existing tools; and newly developed assessments, including performance-based measures and tools that assess other developmental stages, such as adolescence (see pages 51-112).

B4. SEL Assessment to Support Effective Social Emotional Learning Practices at Scale (McKown & Herman, Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center at Penn State, 2020)

The Executive Summary and the concluding paragraph of the above publication makes the case for a continuous improvement, data-informed approach to SEL initiatives in schools and districts:

Efforts to support student social and emotional learning (SEL) in schools are at an all-time high. We know that programs and educational practices to foster SEL, when done well, can produce substantial benefits to students. However, as programs and practices “go to scale,” there is considerable risk that they may be implemented poorly or inconsistently and therefore become less effective. In this brief, we explore the role of assessment — of student competencies, adult practices, and climate — in supporting high-quality SEL at scale. We argue that the wise and targeted use of SEL assessment data should inform what educators do, and should help them learn whether their efforts are benefiting students. SEL assessment data can help the field evolve and grow while maintaining effectiveness. We discuss the key role of state education agencies and federal and state

policy in encouraging the wise use of SEL assessment data to support teaching, learning, and student outcomes as SEL goes to scale.

The field of social and emotional learning has strong evidence to support its potential to benefit many, many children. As SEL “goes big,” we believe that anchoring practice in the regular use of data to guide instruction and for continuous improvement is the very best way for the field to evolve constructively into the future. The alternative—not collecting assessment data—leaves the field vulnerable to practices that do not work, stops working when brought to scale, or works for some students but not others. Many educational movements have come and gone. Remaining committed to collecting ongoing assessment data will help SEL to have staying power, and to fulfill its considerable promise.

C. Resources on Evidence-Based SEL Programs/Interventions

Information on evidence-based SEL programs (those with research indicating a particular impact on relevant outcomes) can be a starting reference point for those interested in exploring what well-developed programs/interventions have to offer schools or districts. However, it is important to keep in mind that stand-alone SEL programs or curricula are just one approach to working towards improved SEL outcomes for all students or subsets of students with at-risk factors. SEL activities and practices can also be integrated into classrooms or other school-based settings or focused on influencing the broader culture and climate of the school.

The first three documents (C1, C2, C3) below summarize evidence-based SEL programs. C4, C5, and C6 are guides that offer a structure for program selection, planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. A theme of the three planning guides is that evidence-based SEL programs/curriculum need to be implemented well to be effective. The final document, C7, starts with the idea that a number of barriers undermine efforts to implement evidence-based SEL programs, and these barriers may be exacerbated in low-income or low-resource school contexts. They describe an alternative approach that involves building social and emotional skills through “evidence-based prevention kernels” rather than programs: *We conceptualize kernels as low-cost, targeted strategies which, in our view, would represent the essential ‘active ingredients’ in the more comprehensive programs we know to be effective. By design, kernels target a specific behavior (one that occurs many times or few per day) and can be taught quickly.*

C1. 2013 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs — Preschool and Elementary School Edition (CASEL 2012)

The 2013 CASEL Guide provides a systematic framework for evaluating the quality of classroom-based SEL programs. It uses this framework to rate and identify well-designed, evidence-based SEL programs with potential for broad dissemination to schools across the United States. The primary goal of the Guide is to give educators information for selecting and implementing SEL programs in their districts and schools.

*The 2013 CASEL Guide **provides information on 23 SElect programs. Four programs target preschool-age children, 16 are designed to be used with children in elementary school (K-5), and three serve both preschool and elementary.** These programs vary in the approach they take to promoting students’ social and emotional skills, but all have documented impact on students’ behavior and/or academic performance. Traditionally, most SEL programs have used explicit lessons to teach students social and emotional skills. This was the most common approach of the SElect programs included in the 2013 Guide. This Guide also identified several evidence-based SEL programs that provide teachers with academic content while simultaneously promoting SEL. Other programs*

emphasize using teacher instructional and classroom management practices to create classroom environments that foster social, emotional, and academic competence.

C2. [2015 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs—Middle and High School Edition \(CASEL 2015\)](#)

*The 2015 CASEL Guide provides information **on nine SElect programs. It also reviews five programs designated as complementary and one promising program. Six of the SElect programs target youth in middle school (grades 6-8), and five are designed to be used with high school students (grades 9-12).** The programs in the Guide vary in the approach they take to promoting students' social and emotional learning, but all positively impact students. The CASEL Guide summarizes objective information about the characteristics of nationally available programs in a clear, easy-to-read 'consumer report' format. The program characteristics in the review are important for high-quality programming. They include the grade range that each program targets and the settings (classroom, school, family, community) in which the program promotes and reinforces the target skills. The Guide also provides information about professional development and implementation support and details about the findings of the programs' evaluation studies.*

C3. [Social and Emotional Interventions under ESSA—Evidence Review \(Grant et al., RAND Corporation, 2017\)](#)

*Although other reviews of SEL interventions have been published, **this report uniquely reviews SEL interventions in the context of ESSA evidence tiers and the opportunities to use federal funds to support SEL.** This report is the latest in a series of evidence reviews commissioned by The Wallace Foundation that provide guidance on evidence-based interventions under ESSA across various priority topics in education (Herman et al., 2017; Ludwig, Boyle, & Lindsay, 2017). This series complements other efforts to help educators understand and apply ESSA evidence requirements, including the "Evidence for ESSA" website developed by the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University (Center for Research and Reform in Education, 2017) ... This report discusses the opportunities for supporting SEL under ESSA, the standards of evidence under ESSA, and SEL interventions that should be eligible for federal funds through ESSA. Federal, state, and district education policymakers can use this report to identify relevant, evidence-based SEL interventions that meet their local needs.*

*Our search identified more than 24,000 citations, of which 4,943 went through full-text eligibility assessment, yielding 150 manuscripts of eligible Social and Emotional Learning Intervention studies evaluating 68 branded and unbranded SEL interventions. ... **Overall, we identified 60 evidence-based SEL interventions under ESSA evidence requirements (40 elementary, 21 middle school, 8 high school).***

Key Findings

- ESSA supports SEL through several different funding streams.
- We identified 60 SEL interventions that meet ESSA evidence requirements.
- Educators in elementary schools and urban communities have the most options for SEL interventions that meet ESSA evidence requirements.
- Interpersonal competencies are the most common outcomes with positive results in studies of evidence-based interventions.

Recommendations

- Use this review to find SEL interventions meeting ESSA evidence Tiers I – III.
- Take advantage of Tier IV flexibility for interventions with no empirical research.

- Address local conditions to facilitate effective intervention implementation.
- Look beyond explicit interventions when designing approaches to promote SEL.
- Provide professional development and other supports to build educators' capacity to gather and use evidence.
- Continue to improve SEL measurement.

C4. [Investing in Evidence Based Social and Emotional Learning: Companion Guide to Social and Emotional Learning Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review \(Wrabel, Hamilton, Whitaker, & Grant, RAND Corporation, 2018\)](#)

This is a Companion Guide to the C3 document above.

The purpose of this companion guide to our evidence review on SEL interventions (Grant et al., 2017) is to provide support for educators on assessing local SEL needs and using these needs assessments to integrate SEL into school practices and improvement efforts. While our guide is especially pertinent to educators looking to leverage federal ESSA funds to support SEL, it can support any SEA, LEA, or educational leader in responsibly allocating scarce resources to support school-based SEL interventions.

The resources and recommended practices in this guide are intended to help education leaders assess local needs and identify appropriate evidence-based SEL interventions to meet those needs. Education leaders should revisit their original needs assessments and their selected interventions, programs, and practices regularly to ensure that these efforts promote equity, maintain coherence across a diverse set of school improvement strategies and fit within the limited resources that LEAs and schools have available. Regardless of whether leaders adopt the comprehensive approach described in this guide or only parts of this approach, this information should help leaders identify SEL interventions that will meet the needs of their local community.

C5. [Navigating SEL from the Inside Out: Looking Inside & Across 25 Leading SEL Programs: A Practical Resource for Schools and OST Providers \(Elementary School Focus\) \(Jones et al., Harvard Graduate School of Education Easel Lab, 2017\)](#)

Researchers, educators, and policy-makers alike are beset by dilemmas about what exactly is included in this broad domain. Popular press highlights skills such as grit, empathy, growth mindset, social skills, and more. While SEL programs typically target multiple skills, very few programs target all of these skills. Furthermore, each program has its own way of building skills through specific teaching and learning activities, and its own programmatic components that define how the program looks and feels, as well as how skills are addressed and presented through explicit messages or implicit themes.

*In our work as researchers and educators, our team frequently receives questions about the content, implementation, and effectiveness of SEL programs and interventions. While good resources exist to identify evidence-based programs (see CASEL's guides, 2003, 2013, 2015), there are currently no available resources to help stakeholders **look inside** these programs to see how they differ from one another and what makes each program unique. For example, some programs are focused on 'character traits' such as honesty, while others focus on skills like understanding emotions and solving problems, or a core theme like identity development. Some programs use discussions as the primary learning activity, while others are movement-based or game-oriented. Some programs have extensive family engagement or teacher professional development components, while others have none. Some programs are designed to be highly flexible and adaptable to context, while others are scripted and uniform.*

*This report addresses that need by looking inside **25 leading SEL and character education programs to identify and summarize key features and attributes of SEL programming for elementary-age children.** Schools and OST [out-of-school-time] organizations vary widely in their missions, structures, pedagogies, and target populations, as do SEL programs. **The goal of this report is to provide schools and OST organizations with detailed information about the specific curricular content and programmatic features of each program in a way that enables them to look across varying approaches and make informed choices** about the type of SEL programming that is best suited to their particular context and needs.*

C6. [Preparing for Effective SEL Implementation \(Jones, Bailey, Brush, & Kahn, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Easel Lab, 2018\)](#)

This 2018 document is intended to complement the 2017 *Navigating SEL From the Inside Out* document in C5 above.

*This brief begins by describing what we know about the features of effective SEL programming and provides a set of recommendations for effective implementation. In addition, we highlight how specific program components may serve as supports for best practices or to address common challenges. The brief concludes with recommendations for how to use our recent report, **Navigating Social and Emotional Learning from the Inside Out**, to identify implementation needs as well as the programs or programmatic features best suited to address them.*

*As mentioned above, the success of SEL programming relies on more than just putting in place a strong, evidence-based curriculum – the curriculum needs to be implemented well. **A growing body of research highlights the conditions needed for effective implementation. Based on this research and our collective experience, we outline a set of recommendations for effective implementation:***

1. *Allot the time required to implement the program sufficiently and effectively.*
2. *Extend SEL beyond the classroom.*
3. *Apply SEL strategies and skills in real-time.*
4. *Ensure sufficient staff support and training.*
5. *Facilitate program ownership and buy-in.*

C7. [Kernels of Practice for SEL: Low-Cost, Low-Burden Strategies \(Jones, Bailey, Brush, & Kahn, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2017\)](#)

This report introduces the idea of considering low-cost, low-burden SEL strategies as an option for educators to consider as a way to implement research on SEL into practice in a school.

Decades of research suggest that preparing children to be caring, ethical, contributing adults requires supporting them to develop social, emotional, and character skills that include focusing and deploying attention; understanding and managing emotions; empathizing with and respecting others; navigating social conflicts effectively; and standing up for principles of justice and fairness.

Throughout history, schools and community centers have served as an important context for building this combination of skills and habits. One common approach has been school and community-based prevention and intervention programs focused on an inter-related set of skills that generally fall under the headings of social and emotional learning (SEL), character education, bullying prevention, conflict resolution, 21st Century/life skills, youth development, and more. Among these approaches, those focused on SEL appear to have the largest and most rigorously evaluated evidence base. For example, SEL programming in the early school years has been shown to improve the culture and climate of schools and classrooms, as well as children’s social, emotional, behavioral, and academic

outcomes. This work is especially relevant for low-income or at-risk students, as children's social-emotional skills are particularly sensitive to the negative effects of stress and trauma.

However, a number of barriers undermine efforts to bring SEL programming to scale, and these barriers are likely exacerbated in low-income and low-resource contexts:

- Implementation challenges (poor fidelity/inability to implement program as designed)
- Limited local buy-in (lack of autonomy, relevance, cultural match)
- Lack of financial, personnel, and structural resources (high cost of materials, extensive time required for adult training/PD)
- Poor integration into educational practice (typically seen as “extra-curricular” or as add-on)
- Low sustainability (often not continued or used consistently over time)

There is a pressing need to develop and test less intensive strategies that comprise an array of flexible and differentiated social, emotional, and behavioral supports, particularly for children exposed to poverty-related stressors and adverse experiences. These strategies can be designed to be adaptable to individual, classroom, and school-specific needs and easy to implement outside the context of a comprehensive program, while still achieving meaningful outcomes.

The interest in smaller scale approaches is not unique to the task of building social and emotional skills. Over the last 10-15 years, there has been a growing movement in the prevention and intervention sciences directed toward identifying evidence-based prevention kernels.

We conceptualize kernels as low-cost, targeted strategies which, in our view, would represent the essential ‘active ingredients’ in the more comprehensive programs we know to be effective. By design, kernels target a specific behavior (one that occurs many times or few per day) and can be taught quickly. As a result, kernels are hypothesized to be both (a) more potent, and (b) more feasible to implement than comprehensive programs, potentially increasing initial uptake, impact, and sustainability over time.

In addition to the above report, there are other “kernel” resources at easel.gse.harvard.edu/czi-kernels-project such as the description of the **CZI Kernels Project**:

Significant attention is frequently placed on the development and testing of comprehensive, often highly structured programs, but far fewer researchers and program developers prioritize the need for adapting and personalizing resources to maximize feasibility, sustainability, and impact in the long-run. Research has consistently demonstrated the relationship between effective program implementation and the adaptability and compatibility of SEL programs; however, the large majority of evidence-based SEL interventions do not provide flexibility, and they frequently view program adaptation as undermining fidelity and impact. Given the prescribed manner of traditional approaches, teachers infrequently have the freedom and flexibility to select the strategies that best fit the needs of their students (i.e., learning style, skill level, interest, etc.). Moreover, a number of other barriers — such as limited time and resources, lack of local buy-in, and poor integration into everyday practice — undermine efforts to bring more comprehensive SEL programming to scale, and these barriers are likely exacerbated in low-income and low-resource contexts.

The Kernels project aims to develop and test a set of evidence-based kernels of practice that represent a smaller-scale, personalized approach to SEL, thereby increasing feasibility, sustainability, and impact across settings. Ultimately, our goal is to draw upon the pilots we have completed to date to further develop, refine, and test a set of kernels that can be deployed and effectively integrated into daily practices.

II. How is SEL Being Implemented?

The following resources are described in this second section.

D. Resources on District Initiatives to Improve SEL Outcomes	E. Resources on School Initiatives to Improve SEL Outcomes	F. Resources on Classroom-Level SEL Implementation	G. Applying an Equity Lens to SEL Supports	H. Applying SEL Supports to School Reopening during the COVID-19 Pandemic	I. National SEL Reports/Resources for States
<p>D1. CASEL Collaborating Districts Initiative (website)</p> <p>D2. Key Implementation Insights from the Collaborating Districts Initiative: A multiyear effort to help school districts integrate social and emotional learning across all aspects of their work. What have we learned? What's next? (CASEL, 2017)</p> <p>D3. Enacting Social-Emotional Learning: Practices and Supports Employed in CORE Districts and Schools (Marsh et al., PACE Collaborative, 2018)</p> <p>D4. Integrating Social, Emotional and Academic Development (The Aspen Institute Education and Society Program, 2018)</p>	<p>E1. The CASEL School Guide to Schoolwide Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2020)</p> <p>E2. Integrating Social, Emotional and Academic Development: An Action Guide for School Leadership Teams (The Aspen Institute Education and Society Program, 2019)</p> <p>E3. Centering Educators' Expertise: Learning About Innovative Approaches to Social-Emotional Learning from School Partners in the Boston Charter Research Collaborative (Gutierrez, Krachman, & Buckley, Transforming Education and Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard, 2019)</p>	<p>F1. Transforming Education's SEL Integration Approach for Classroom Educators (Transforming Education, 2019)</p> <p>F2. Supporting Social, Emotional & Academic Development: Research Implications for Educators (Allensworth et al., CCSR, 2018)</p> <p>F3. Preparing Teachers to Support Social and Emotional Learning A Case Study of San Jose State University and Lakewood Elementary School (Melnick & Martinez, Learning Policy Institute, 2019)</p>	<p>G1. Applying an Equity Lens to Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (Simmons, Brackett, & Adler, The Pennsylvania State University, 2018)</p> <p>G2. Measuring SEL: Frameworks Briefs Special Issues Series—Transformative Social and Emotional Learning: Using an Equity Lens (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Borowski; Adapted by Saavedra & Nolan, 2018)</p>	<p>H1. From Response to Reopening: State Efforts to Elevate Social and Emotional Learning During the Pandemic (Yoder, Posamentier, Godek, Seibel, Dusenbury, CASEL, 2020)</p> <p>H2. Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Roadmap for Reopening School (CASEL, 2020)</p>	<p>I1. From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope (The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, 2018)</p> <p>I2. Social and Emotional Learning and Development, Conditions for Learning, and Whole Child Supports in ESSA State Plans (Young & Webb, CCSO, 2019)</p> <p>I3. Measuring School Climate and Social and Emotional Learning and Development: A Navigation Guide for States and Districts (Holahan & Batey, CCSO, 2019)</p> <p>I4. Federal Funding Streams and Strategies to Improve Conditions for Learning: A Resource Guide for States (CCSSO, 2019)</p> <p>I5. CASEL Collaborating States Initiative</p> <p>I5.1. CASEL State Education Agency Theory of Action (Yoder, Martinez-Black, Dusenbury, & Weissberg, 2020)</p> <p>I5.2. Emerging Insights Series: From Insights to Action Redefining State Efforts to Support Social and Emotional (Yoder, Dusenbury, Martinez-Black, & Weissberg, CASEL Collaborating States Initiative, 2020)</p> <p>I6. Teacher Perspectives on Social and Emotional Learning in Massachusetts: Findings from the American Teacher Panel (Doss, Steiner, & Hamilton, RAND Corporation, 2019)</p> <p>I7. Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety at WestEd (website)</p>

D. Resources on District Initiatives to Improve SEL Outcomes

What resources are available to help districts in planning and implementing efforts to improve SEL outcomes? Like most approaches to improving outcomes, the planning aspect of a new initiative is critical (as is evaluating implementation, revising, and continuing to examine outcomes — the PDSA cycle). While SEL initiatives are being implemented by schools in the absence of district initiatives, district-level leadership and support is considered critical to successful school-level implementation.

D1. [CASEL Collaborating Districts Initiative \(website\)](#)

The following is from The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) website describing its work with districts:

The Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI) was organized in 2011 to help school districts across the country systemically integrate social and emotional learning (SEL) into all their work. To assess the impact of the CDI's efforts, CASEL entered into an ongoing data collection and evaluation partnership with the districts and American Institutes for Research (AIR). Data were collected to measure the implementation and resulting outcomes. Since implementation of the CDI, academic achievement has improved consistently in reading and math. Teachers have become more effective. Attendance and graduation rates are up. Suspensions and expulsions are down. Students feel safer and more connected to school. While the availability of data varied by district, qualitative and quantitative outcomes are promising. External evaluations also showed consistent year-to-year improvements in school culture and climate, as well as student outcomes. The bottom line: Even very modest investments in SEL can pay off for individuals, schools, and society.

D2. [Key Implementation Insights from the Collaborating Districts Initiative: A multiyear effort to help school districts integrate social and emotional learning across all aspects of their work. What have we learned? What impact have we seen? What's next? \(CASEL, 2017\)](#)

This report is one from a series of reports on the Collaborating Districts Initiative that can be found on the CASEL website:

Six years ago CASEL took the unprecedented step of launching an effort to study and scale high-quality, evidence-based academic, social, and emotional learning in eight of the largest and most complex school systems in the country: Anchorage, Austin, Chicago, Cleveland, Nashville, Oakland, Sacramento, and Washoe County, Nev. With the recent addition of Atlanta and El Paso, the Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI) now includes 10 districts, enrolling 900,000 students a year. It is one of the most comprehensive and ambitious school district improvement initiatives ever.

See link for an infographic summary of key insights: www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/District-Key-Insights.pdf

D3. [Enacting Social-Emotional Learning: Practices and Supports Employed in CORE Districts and Schools \(Marsh et al., PACE Collaborative, 2018\)](#)

This 2018 report describes SEL practices in a network of California school districts—called the CORE districts—that have worked collaboratively to measure and improve SEL. The report focuses on schools with student-reported data on SEL outcomes, particularly for African American and Latinx students.

Despite this growing interest, many districts and schools are still struggling to implement programs and practices that effectively develop students' social-emotional skills. In many ways, this is a new instantiation of an old problem in education. This phenomenon—the disconnect between having a

solid knowledge base and the actual work that occurs—is often referred to as the knowing–doing gap (Pfeffer & Sutton, 1999).

Part of the challenge in implementing SEL is that the definition of SEL and what constitutes high-quality SEL support and instruction are often elusive and unclear (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Jones & Doolittle, 2016). This lack of clarity is significant because successful implementation of SEL instruction, supports, and programs must include a shared understanding of the who, what, when, where, and how. Research has shown that a key element of effective implementation is common language and definition, as well as coordinated work towards a shared vision (Durlak, 2011; Durlak et al., 2011). In implementing and sustaining high-quality SEL, then, practices are important, but so is knowing whether and how the practices ultimately affect students. To this end, identifying and measuring the ways in which districts and schools are defining, supporting, and improving student SEL outcomes are areas of growing interest. As such, several researchers have called for more research on schools' implementation of SEL strategies (e.g., Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

*Similarly, policymakers and practitioners often talk about needing information about concrete practices and approaches that can provide a basis for action. While every school and district will have to choose for itself what approaches will be best for their specific context, knowing what successful schools and districts have done, and why, can provide a powerful starting point. **This knowledge about what has worked in successful organizations is sometimes referred to as practice-based evidence (Bryk, 2015).***

To this end, we explore in this report the SEL practices in one network of California school districts—the CORE districts—that are working together to measure and improve SEL outcomes. These eight school districts (Fresno, Garden Grove, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento, San Francisco, and Santa Ana) are perhaps best known for the waiver they received from the U.S. Department of Education that freed them from some of their federal obligations under No Child Left Behind. Under the terms of the waiver, six of the CORE districts developed an innovative accountability system that included measuring social emotional learning in their multiple measures accountability system...

Specifically, the report addresses the following questions:

- 1. How do educators in the central office and the schools being studied define social emotional learning?*
- 2. What strategies do schools use to enact and support the various conceptions of SEL?*
- 3. How do districts support school-based practices intended to develop SEL?*

D4. Integrating Social, Emotional and Academic Development (The Aspen Institute Education and Society Program, 2018)

In an effort to advance equity, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides federal funds to assist states and districts in meeting the needs of traditionally underserved students, including students of color, students from low-income families, English learners, students with disabilities, and students who are homeless or in foster care. In exchange for robust data reporting, increased transparency, and a commitment to improve underperforming schools, ESSA provides states and districts with the financial flexibility to use federal ESSA funds on a wide range of actions. Traditionally, district leaders have limited federal funds to expenditures that clearly met federal compliance requirements, such as funding additional academic interventions, due to concerns about triggering federal audits or oversight. While the law's requirement to ensure that federal funds supplement, and do not supplant, state and local funds remains, district and school leaders are no longer bound by accounting restrictions that required to them to make cumbersome financial demonstrations.

As a result, district and school leaders now possess greater latitude to invest ESSA funds in ways they think are most likely to benefit underserved students, including aligning their use of ESSA funds with the district's existing strategic priorities. This guide is intended to help district leaders disrupt the compliance mindset and inertia that have characterized traditional implementation of federal grants and leverage federal funding and programs in service of a more equitable education system.

E. Resources on School Initiatives to Improve SEL Outcomes

There is much interest in social and emotional learning at the school principal level but less clarity on how to best implement it, according to a 2017 national survey of principals (see *Ready to Lead: A National Principal Survey on How Social and Emotional Learning Can Prepare Children and Transform Schools. A Report for CASEL* (DePaoli, Atwell, and Bridgeland, 2017); and also a 2019 update to the 2017 report at casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Ready-to-Lead_FINAL.pdf.

A preface (pg. 1) to the 2017 report described the current status.

*Educators know that social and emotional development improves student behavior, classroom management, school climate, and even student health. They also know that social and emotional learning improves grades and standardized test scores, boosts graduation rates and postsecondary completion rates, and leads to better employment outcomes. Given these measurable benefits, there is great urgency to integrate social and emotional learning frameworks. This report illustrates the motivation behind these school leaders' commitment: they realize that developing the whole student is the key to creating schools that are safe and challenging; is fundamental to shaping students who are supported and inspired; is critical to ensuring that teachers can be effective and fulfilled; and is the foundation of communities where citizenship, purpose, employment, and stability are possible for every child. **This report tells another story, too: although interest in social and emotional learning is overwhelmingly high, principals and administrators are hungry for the expertise necessary to adopt new strategies. In some ways, there is a tension in the data: while the vast majority of leaders believe that social and emotional development is essential to education, the pathway to change is not always clear; moreover, the time and training to make the necessary changes are in short supply. These experts tell us that there is a lot of will, but not as much clarity and support, along the way.***

Below are two guides for and one report on school-level planning and implementation of social and emotional learning initiatives. The first two are school improvement planning guides and the third report is a description of a networked, collaborative process among a set of implementing schools.

E1. [The CASEL School Guide to Schoolwide Social and Emotional Learning \(CASEL, 2020\)](#)

This resource is a comprehensive online guide to implementing schoolwide social and emotional learning as described on the website:

Implementing and sustaining systemic SEL is a long-term process driven by continuous improvement. CASEL identifies four Focus Areas for engaging in high-quality schoolwide SEL implementation:

- *Build foundational support and plan for SEL.*
- *Strengthen adult SEL competencies and capacity: Cultivating supportive, caring adults who model and practice their own SEL.*
- *Promote SEL for Students: Providing all students with frequent, well-designed, and consistent opportunities to engage in and practice developmentally-appropriate and culturally-relevant SEL*
- *Practice continuous improvement: Using continuous improvement cycles to facilitate high-quality implementation every step of the way.*

The School Guide's four focus areas help you organize, implement, and improve your SEL efforts. While implementation is not a linear process, we recommend beginning with Focus Area 1 to build a strong foundation. Then, your school can engage in activities to both strengthen adult SEL (Focus Area 2) and promote SEL for students (Focus Area 3). Every step of implementation is guided by a process of continuous improvement (Focus Area 4). In each focus area, you'll also have an opportunity to track your school's progress through the Schoolwide SEL Implementation Rubric.

E2. Integrating Social, Emotional and Academic Development: An Action Guide for School Leadership Team (The Aspen Institute Education and Society Program, 2019)

This action guide provides school leadership teams with a resource for integrating the social, emotional and academic needs of young people into the daily student experience, from the time a bus driver greets a student until the end of the school day. It supports the school leader and his/her team in mapping out an approach for integrating the social, emotional, and academic needs of students into the way adults and students experience school each moment of the school day.

Each school community must draw on the science of learning and the wisdom of experience while responding to the unique aspirations and values of students, families, faculty, and other stakeholders. To guide action on this agenda, this resource is organized into five sections:

1. *Vision of Student Success*
2. *Student Learning Experience*
3. *Adult Learning in Support of Student Success*
4. *Learning Environment and School Climate*
5. *Asset Mapping and Resource Allocation.*

Each section summarizes foundational research, identifies equity implications, offers guiding questions to stimulate inquiry, and suggests high-impact actions. Finally, there are vignettes that illustrates what this looks like in practice, and links to curated resources that support deeper exploration of the issues and opportunities.

The school principal and leadership team (including teacher leaders) are key levers of transformation for a school community. This action guide both challenges and supports school leaders in advancing SEAD to meet the excellence and equity mission of public education.

From Education First website about this Guide: education-first.com/library/publication/integrating-social-emotional-and-academic-development-sead/

*To help principals and school leadership teams see how social and emotional learning can enhance academic performance, and how to weave social-emotional development into every aspect of school, the Aspen Institute and its partners created **Integrating Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (SEAD): An Action Guide for School Leadership Teams**. The guide provides practical advice, curated resources, and action steps for school leaders to improve the student experience, calling out specific equity implications in every section to give these issues priority in planning.*

*Co-developed with practitioner-leaders from Minneapolis and Nashville public schools, and experts from University of Chicago, Student Achievement Partners, Dana Center at UT-Austin, Education Resource Strategies, and Education First, the SEAD School Action Guide is a resource that empowers and challenges principals and their teams to address the social, emotional, and academic dimensions of learning together to advance equity. **If you are a school leader who is eager to enact a whole-***

child agenda, this action guide will help you organize for planning, professional development, and continuous improvement.

E3. Centering Educators' Expertise: Learning About Innovative Approaches to Social-Emotional Learning from School Partners in the Boston Charter Research Collaborative (Gutierrez, Krachman, & Buckley, Transforming Education and Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard, 2019)

This is a report on a multi-year collaborative of six schools implementing social-emotional initiatives.

The Boston Charter Research Collaborative (BCRC, the Collaborative) is a multi-year research-practice partnership (RPP) among six high-performing charter management organizations (CMOs); 2 researchers at Harvard University's Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT); and Transforming Education (TransformEd). These organizations combine their expertise to conduct research and improve practice to support the development of students' cognitive and social-emotional (SE) competencies.

Over the past five years, this partnership has aimed to deepen educators' and researchers' understanding of social-emotional learning and its implications in the classroom through an interdisciplinary collaboration and a shared investment in positive student outcomes. The first two years of the partnership focused primarily on research activities, including meetings with each CMO, known as 'data deep dives,' to review trends in schools' SE competencies data. Since the third year of the partnership, however, we have also facilitated annual meetings, known as 'knowledge sharing convenings,' to discuss promising practices and CMOs' progress to date in supporting students' SE learning. We have shared our learnings from both types of meetings in prior BCRC white papers.

Transforming Education describes additional school networks on its website: see **New Schools Invent Partnership** at www.transformingeducation.org/our-work/with-schools-and-systems/newschools-invent-partnership/

F. Resources on Classroom Level SEL Implementation

The first resource in this section is a comprehensive website found at Transforming Education (<https://www.transformingeducation.org/>) with many resources for teachers. The second resource is a report that synthesizes research on SEL in school settings and offers a useful Infographic for examining current status entitled, *Supporting Social, Emotional, & Academic Development: What questions can the adults in a school ask themselves as they work to create a supportive school climate?*

The third document describes one school's efforts to embed SEL with significant leadership by teachers. It also offers a useful Infographic entitled *Ways that Social-Emotional Learning Can be Integrated Throughout the School Day*.

F1. Transforming Education's SEL Integration Approach for Classroom Educators (Transforming Education, 2019)

This document provides a visual model for integrating SEL into the school day.

By integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into the fabric of the school day, educators can support students in honing their existing skills and mindsets to help them succeed in school and in the broader world. The development of social emotional skills is informed by context, culture, and students' interaction with different environments. Therefore, it is important that SEL-related activities in the classroom focus on helping students to learn, build, and practice skills that they can also apply at home and in their communities.

*The **SEL Integration Approach** guides classroom educators in how to integrate SEL into academic curriculum and daily classroom routines. Using this approach, teachers can support students' development of social-emotional skills in ways that are applicable across various areas of their lives, more sustainable over time, and flexible to changing goals and priorities across the lifespan. This approach thus serves as an impactful resource to support and promote students' lifelong learning.*

The document poses the following questions to teachers thinking about integrating SEL:

What are your goals for supporting your students' social-emotional development? How can you leverage your students' strengths and engage their interests, backgrounds, and experiences to practice SEL? Where do you see opportunities to discuss and practice social-emotional skills in your lessons in ways that are directly connected to academic learning? How can you use the different components to meet students where they are and scaffold their learning?

Transforming Education provides a well-organized, easily accessible set of online tools and resources for integrating SEL into the classroom. For example, there is a *Teacher Self-Check Tool* (www.transformingeducation.org/sel-integration-approach-teacher-self-check-tool/).

In addition, the website provides **Toolkits** for how to integrate particular SEL competencies into classrooms, such as a *growth mindset Toolkit* www.transformingeducation.org/growth-mindset-toolkit/ and a *self-management Toolkit* www.transformingeducation.org/self-management-toolkit/

F2. Supporting Social, Emotional & Academic Development: Research Implications for Educators (Allensworth et al., CCSR, 2018)

This document can be a useful starting point for teachers in a grade level, subject area, or in other types of professional learning communities to explore how to conceptualize a school SEL initiative.

The synthesis begins with evidence about student engagement, which is the basis for all learning. The next chapter shows that classroom conditions influence student engagement and begins to make the connection between social-emotional components of learning and classroom structures. The following chapter goes into more detail about students' experiences of the class—how their perceptions and interpretations of themselves in relation to their learning environment influence their engagement, with implications for how teachers can promote encouraging mindsets. Subsequent chapters discuss the value of responsive classrooms, and the importance of family engagement, and what these each mean for school leaders.

The infographic provided in the link below offers a common language in reflecting on school progress in creating a supportive school climate:

consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2019-01/2325-Supporting-Social-Emotional-Infographic-Oct2018-Consortium.pdf

For example, it asks teachers to reflect on several questions about their classrooms:

- *Have I set up my classroom in ways that promote positive academic mindsets?*
- *Do all my students feel...*
 - *They belong in this learning community?*
 - *They can succeed at this?*
 - *They will see their ability and competence grow with effort?*
 - *That the work has value to them?*
- *Am I using grade and attendance data to tell me who needs more support?*

F3. Preparing Teachers to Support Social and Emotional Learning A Case Study of San Jose State University and Lakewood Elementary School (Melnick & Martinez, Learning Policy Institute, 2019)

This report describes how an elementary school developed a schoolwide SEL approach with leadership from teachers and with the involvement of a teacher preparation program.

The evidence is clear: Social and emotional skills, habits, and mindsets can set students up for academic and life success. Given that decades of research show that a focus on social and emotional learning (SEL) can lead to positive outcomes, from increased test scores and graduation rates to improved prosocial skills that support student success in school and beyond, SEL is now considered part of a whole child education. It is less clear what schools and teachers can do to develop these abilities.

This two-part study offers information on how preservice and in-service teacher training can support good teaching practices and implement SEL in schools, while providing a picture of what SEL looks like when integrated into the school day. The first part describes how one preservice program prepares teachers for the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning, focusing on San Jose State University (SJSU)'s elementary teacher preparation program. The second part provides a glimpse into in-service professional development for SEL in Lakewood Elementary School in Sunnyvale, CA. This report is the first in a series intended to inform policymakers, practitioners, and teacher educators about the components of strong, SEL-focused teacher preparation and development programs.

The report describes four key aspects of Lakewood Elementary's work to embed an SEL schoolwide focus that contributed to its sustainability.

1. *SEL is intentionally implemented through a variety of instructional approaches.*
2. *Teachers and administrators are co-leaders in developing and growing the school's SEL program and pieces.*
3. *Educators' preparation and the development of their own social and emotional skills support SEL implementation.*
4. *The school's structures and resources support the whole child.*

Also see an infographic entitled, **Ways that Social-Emotional Learning Can Be Integrated Throughout the School Day:**

learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/Integrating_Social_Emotional_Learning_INFOGRAPHIC.pdf

G. Applying an Equity Lens to Social and Emotional Learning Supports

The first document below makes the case that it is important to “apply an equity lens” to student access to a high-quality SEL education. In terms of a definition of equity in education, the second document describes it this way:

Many educators, district administrators, and state leaders strive for equity in education. Educational equity means that all students have access to the same resources and educational rigor despite race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background, or family income. Multiple barriers stand in the way of achieving equity, including school resource allocation, existing community inequities, and biased perspectives. Educators and education leaders do not have total control over these factors. However, they do have control over how they view themselves, their students, the school community, the world, and how they act on these perspectives.

In terms of SEL, they pose the question: *How can SEL be leveraged to help youth from historically marginalized race/ethnic and socioeconomic groups to realize their fullest potential as contributing members of an increasingly complex and diverse global community?*

G1. Applying an Equity Lens to Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (Simmons, Brackett, & Adler, The Pennsylvania State University, 2018)

From the Executive Summary:

There are barriers, however, that prevent many students of color and other marginalized youth from developing social and emotional competencies. For all students to benefit, SEL must be grounded in a larger context of equity and justice efforts within public education. Doing so will help to identify and dismantle barriers that prevent many students from accessing and benefitting from SEL. Importantly, these efforts should not be viewed as a corrective measure for students of color and marginalized youth, but rather as an opportunity to ensure all children experience the benefits of a quality education that includes opportunities for social, emotional, and academic development (SEAD).

Five barriers contribute to inequitable access to a high-quality SEL education, and in turn, opportunities for all children to have healthy SEAD:

Systemic level barriers

- *Poverty limits the SEAD of young people and diminishes present and future education and life prospects*

Institutional level barriers

- *Exclusionary discipline practices and policies are disproportionately used to punish students of color and marginalized youth, limiting SEAD opportunities*
- *Lack of trauma-informed practices adversely impacts students' SEAD opportunities and their life outcomes*

Individual level barriers

- *Implicit bias in school staff engenders low expectations and disengagement for students of color and marginalized youth*
- *Educator stress and burnout reduce the safety and productivity of the classroom and educators' ability to model SEL skills*

Opportunities

Although no single solution can eliminate the barriers noted above, the following programs, initiatives, and policies may increase access to SEAD resources:

- *School racial and socioeconomic integration initiatives*
- *Restorative justice practices for school discipline*
- *Trauma-informed system interventions to create supportive school environments*
- *Culturally competent and equity-literate educators and academic content to reduce implicit bias*
- *SEL and mindfulness programming to support students and teachers to cope with stress, develop SEL skills, and create healthy, caring schools*

While promising efforts exist, more research is needed to test innovations that can inform policies and practices to enhance students' health and wellbeing equitably.

G2. Measuring SEL: Frameworks Briefs Special Issues Series—Transformative Social and Emotional Learning: Using an Equity Lens (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Borowski; Adapted by Saavedra & Nolan, 2018)

The document describes an approach called transformative SEL using the CASEL Framework and highlights practices to promote transformative SEL in schools.

Social and emotional development is a life-long and reflection-driven process. Understanding this notion is essential prior to implementing SEL at any level. Social and emotional development should be understood as a complex, dynamic, ongoing, and culturally-adaptive process. How social and emotional competencies develop and are expressed varies across developmental stages, race, class, gender, contexts, cultures, and countries. Individuals learn to socialize, or interact with others, and express themselves in a way that is appropriate to the community in which they were raised. Strategies to implement SEL must be responsive to, rather than blunt, these assets and experiences. In the school setting, building stronger SE competencies starts with teacher and leader reflection. Without careful consideration, our ideas about SEL and how we implement it risk operating from a deficit orientation. In other words, educators might operationalize SEL as a means to “fix” students rather than help them grow and thrive as unique individuals.

Social and emotional competencies can be expressed similarly across developmental stages but differently by culture. If educators and leaders implement SEL without regard to students’ cultural, racial/ethnic, linguistic, or economic backgrounds, some students may feel more alienated in their classrooms. To ameliorate this concern, educators can rethink and define SEL as transformative SEL, a process whereby students and teachers build strong, respectful relationships founded on an appreciation of similarities and differences; learn to critically examine root causes of inequity; and develop collaborative solutions to community and social problems.

H. Applying SEL Supports to School Reopening during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The two documents below provide a rationale and guidance for district and school efforts to enhance student and staff social emotional support as schools reopen during the pandemic.

H1. From Response to Reopening: State Efforts to Elevate Social and Emotional Learning During the Pandemic (Yoder, Posamentier, Godek, Seibel, Dusenbury, CASEL, 2020)

The rationale for increased attention to SEL during the school reopening is articulated as follows:

During this time of physical distance combined with social unrest due to racial inequities, we are asking students and adults to demonstrate new ways of engaging and interacting. We are asking them to show compassion and empathy for others by staying home so others do not get sick and by understanding others’ experience with unjust systems (social awareness); to maintain meaningful relationships with their teachers, families, and peers through Zoom, Google Hangouts, and other video chat and social media outlets; to collectively problem-solve (relationship skills); to make daily choices to stay motivated and engaged with learning and assignments; to decide to be civically engaged (responsible decision-making); to manage their own stressors and anxiety in ways that are new or potentially uncomfortable (self-management); and to reflect on their own emotions, strengths and identities (self-awareness). In other words, we are asking students and adults to further exercise their social and emotional competencies—stretching those that we may never have thought we had or would need to use.

The authors describe six recommendations for how states can support districts and schools in increasing the focus on social and emotional learning during the pandemic and school reopening.

1. *Communicate SEL as Important for All Students and Adults*
2. *Define and Coordinate SEL and Mental Health Supports*
3. *Disseminate SEL Practices in the Time of the Pandemic*
4. *Provide Professional Learning and Support for Adult SEL Competencies, Capacities, and Wellness*
5. *Leverage Data for Continuous Improvement*
6. *Encourage Use of Funds*

The authors summarize the recommendations as follows:

These six recommendations point to an overarching need across the nation to rethink schools and SEL supports as we enter a new era of public education and address social, emotional, and academic learning.

H2. Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Roadmap for Reopening School (CASEL, 2020)

Recognizing the need to provide guidance to schools, this document was developed by a collaborative of over 40 expert partners working with CASEL to generate recommendations on how to reopen schools effectively. The CASEL press release (July 8, 2020) on the document describes the context schools face this way:

*As educators across the country prepare to welcome students and adults back to school, they face the layered impact of school closures, the COVID-19 pandemic, and racial inequities exacerbated by the pandemic and amplified by the nationwide mobilization for racial justice. **The return to school this year will be unlike any other in our history. This moment will call on all members of our school communities to deepen our social and emotional competencies and create equitable learning environments where all students and adults process, heal, and thrive.***

From the “How to Use This Roadmap” introduction to the document:

Schools at any stage of SEL implementation can use this roadmap to build upon existing efforts around community-building, school climate improvement, student well-being and mental health, trauma-responsive learning environments, restorative practices, and social and emotional competency development. It is also intended to help you reflect and act upon what you can do that is different to leverage the historical moment we are in. While this guidance is written for schools, states and districts will also play critical roles in ensuring schools have the resources, support, and guidance needed to carry out these actions.

This roadmap offers four SEL Critical Practices divided into specific activities to help schools create supportive learning environments and foster social, emotional, and academic learning as we reunite and renew through a global pandemic and mobilization against systemic racism. Each activity provides a set of essential questions intended to prompt you and your school community to reflect and pause, followed by a roadmap of action steps as you prepare and implement SEL practices throughout the school year and beyond. Each activity also provides links to a curated set of user-friendly tools to help operationalize the guidance. At the end of each Critical Practice you can find recommendations to sustain the work. If you have printed this toolkit, you can access all linked tools at casel.org/sel-in-action/reopening-with-SEL

The authors recommend prioritizing at least one activity in each Critical Practice area to get started. There are 3-5 activities described in the document for each of the four Critical Practice areas below.

- ***SEL Critical Practice 1: Take time to cultivate and deepen relationships, build partnerships, and plan for SEL.***
- ***SEL Critical Practice 2: Design opportunities where adults can connect, heal, and build their capacity to support students.***
- ***SEL Critical Practice 3: Create safe, supportive, and equitable learning environments that promote all students' social and emotional development.***
- ***SEL Critical Practice 4: Use data as an opportunity to share power, deepen relationships, and continuously improve support for students, families, and staff.***

I. National SEL Reports/Resources for States

The following documents/resources describe state and national level resources.

11. [From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope \(The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, 2018\)](#)

About the Commission and This Report

The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development was created to engage and energize communities in re-envisioning learning to encompass its social, emotional, and cognitive dimensions so that all children can succeed in school, careers, and life. The Commission's work has drawn on research and promising practices to recommend how to make all these dimensions of learning part of the fabric of every school and community. The Commission's members are leaders from education, research, policy, business, and the military. The full Commission team includes a Council of Distinguished Scientists, a Council of Distinguished Educators, a Youth Commission, a Parent Advisory Panel, a Partners Collaborative, and a Funders Collaborative.

This culminating report from the nation, to the nation, draws on the input we received over the past two years from conversations, meetings, and site visits across the country, as well as from the members of all these groups. It reflects the more detailed recommendations for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers contained in three separate, related reports: A Practice Agenda in Support of How Learning Happens, A Policy Agenda in Support of How Learning Happens, and A Research Agenda for the Next Generation. All four reports, and related resources, can be found on our website at www.NationAtHope.org." The table of contents is shown below:

Introduction: A Nation at Hope A growing movement dedicated to the social, emotional, and academic well-being of children is reshaping learning and changing lives across America. On the strength of its remarkable consensus, a nation at risk is finally a nation at hope.

Chapter One: How Learning Happens A solid body of scientific evidence confirms that learning has social, emotional, and cognitive dimensions that are inextricably linked. This chapter lays out the evidence base and draws on site visits and interviews with people in local communities to identify the essential elements of what it looks like to successfully educate the whole learner.

Chapter Two: Recommendations for Action Based on conversations with hundreds of people across the nation over the past two years, including students and their families, the Commission's final recommendations describe strategies that can help local communities address young people's comprehensive development, including illustrative examples from the field.

Chapter Three: All Together Now We now know so much more about what we ought to do to successfully educate all children. The time has come to join together to make sure every child has the full complement of skills he or she needs to learn and to thrive. This chapter describes six key levers that can move our collective work forward and the role that each of us can play in accelerating a movement to educate the whole learner.

Also see: nationathope.org/wp-content/uploads/aspen_practice_final_web_optimized.pdf

12. [Social and Emotional Learning and Development, Conditions for Learning, and Whole Child Supports in ESSA State Plans \(Young & Webb, CCSSO, 2019\)](#)

This brief will examine key opportunities or “levers” that ESSA presents to states and their communities to specifically advance social and emotional learning and development, positive conditions for learning, and whole child supports. States include varying degrees of detail and take advantage of a variety of opportunities in their ESSA plans to advance these supports and learning environments. We recognize that states may have taken advantage of opportunities outside of ESSA to prioritize social and emotional learning and development, conditions of learning, and whole child supports. For purposes of this brief, we are solely focusing on the levers states have used under ESSA. The brief will then provide highlights from several federal ESSA state plans that illustrate how states are leading in specific areas.

13. [Measuring School Climate and Social and Emotional Learning and Development: A Navigation Guide for States and Districts \(Holahan & Batey, CCSSO, 2019\)](#)

State leaders have a responsibility to ensure every student has access to a safe and supportive school environment. In 2017, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), in partnership with the Aspen Institute Education & Society Program identified specific actions to improve conditions for learning by focusing on school culture, climate, and social and emotional learning and development to “ensure students can learn in environments that are conducive to developing skills, habits, and dispositions that support success in school and beyond.” One approach state leaders can take to inform and guide the improvement of conditions for learning is to explore opportunities for measuring social and emotional learning and school climate for use in state and local education systems.

The purpose of this guide is to assist states and districts in making decisions about which types of measures related to social and emotional learning and development and/or school climate to use, how those measures could be used, and important factors to consider in the process. In developing this tool, CCSSO and Education Counsel interviewed and consulted with researchers, practitioners, and other subject matter experts and conducted a literature review of resources and tools in the field. Given the many resources and experts in social and emotional learning, school climate, and measurement, this tool serves as a guide for states that are navigating these decisions by sharing:

- *key principles related to selecting and using these measures,*
- *the benefits and challenges of using different measures,*
- *the purposes for which different measures may be appropriate to use, and*
- *key resources to dig deeper in relevant areas.*

I4. Federal Funding Streams and Strategies to Improve Conditions for Learning: A Resource Guide for States (CCSSO, 2019)

This *Resource Guide for States* includes the following chapters:

- I. Background
- II. CCSSO's Vision for Improving the Conditions for Learning
- III. Federal Funding Sources that Can Be Tapped when States and LEAs Develop Strategies for Improving the Conditions for Learning
 1. Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)
 2. Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (Title IV, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act)
 3. Medicaid
 4. Food and Nutrition Programs
 5. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B: Grants to States
 6. HRSA School-Based Health Centers Program
 7. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Healthy Schools Program
 8. National Activities for School Safety
 9. Education for Homeless Children and Youth
 10. Corporation for National and Community Service
 11. Title II, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants
- IV. Strategies for States to Consider
- V. Conclusion

I5. CASEL Collaborating States Initiative

I5.1. CASEL State Education Agency Theory of Action (Yoder, Martinez-Black, Dusenbury, & Weissberg, 2020)

In this document, CASEL lays out a State Theory of Action (TOA) for developing SEL strategies:

The goal of the State TOA is to provide a tool for state teams to reflect on and advance the role of the SEA, in partnership with other state agencies and their respective stakeholders, to implement high-quality SEL across the state. Further, the State TOA helps the state team self-assess how it is organized, how well it is supporting implementation, and how it is continuously improving SEL. SEAs can use the State TOA to guide their strategies, recognizing that this work will take time and continuous improvement to fully implement. (See Appendix B for logic model connecting activities to outcomes.)

The State TOA is organized into four focus areas that align with CASEL's district and school theories of action (and corresponding rubrics): (1) build foundational support and plan; (2) strengthen adult SEL competencies and capacities; (3) promote SEL for and with students; and (4) reflect on data for continuous improvement. Each focus area has between three and six key activities, for a total of 20 key activities that lay out essential state-level actions for implementing SEL (see Appendix A).

15.2. Emerging Insights Series: From Insights to Action Redefining State Efforts to Support Social and Emotional (Yoder, Dusenbury, Martinez-Black, & Weissberg, CASEL Collaborating States Initiative, 2020)

This 2020 document is from the CASEL Emerging Insights Series and is described as follows:

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. This report updates our original June 2018 Emerging Insights report and shares recent innovations and advancements in the ways states are advancing statewide SEL.

In this brief, we highlight the ways state education agencies (SEAs) have developed policies and practices to promote systemic SEL within states and across their districts and schools. Specifically, we first provide information about CASEL's Collaborating States Initiative (CSI) and the progress of state teams. Second, we provide descriptive and state examples for each activity within the four focus areas of CASEL's state theory of action: 1) build foundational support and plan for SEL, 2) strengthen adult SEL competencies and capacities; 3) promote student SEL; and 4) reflect on data for continuous improvement.

16. Teacher Perspectives on Social and Emotional Learning in Massachusetts: Findings from the American Teacher Panel (Doss, Steiner, & Hamilton, RAND Corporation, 2019)

Recent shifts in education policy have emphasized expanding definitions of student success beyond high scores on standardized tests. Massachusetts is one of a growing number of U.S. states that have articulated social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies, standards, or policies that encourage adoption and implementation of SEL programs and practices in districts and schools. This report presents American Teacher Panel survey results on teachers' perspectives about social and emotional learning. It analyzes results from teachers in Massachusetts and how they compare to their peers in the rest of the nation on three topics: (1) teachers' opinions about SEL, (2) their approaches to promoting students' social and emotional development, (3) and their perceptions of supports that would help them do this more effectively. Like their peers in the nation, large majorities of Massachusetts teachers recognize the importance of SEL and believe it can have an effect other domains of student development. Massachusetts teachers also reported a greater use of some SEL programs, and less use of schoolwide behavioral management systems compared to teachers in the rest of the nation. Most Massachusetts teachers expressed an interest in more support in integrating SEL into instruction. The report discusses the need for future research on how the Massachusetts state policy context could affect the views Massachusetts teachers on SEL.

Also see:

Teacher and Principal Perspectives on Social and Emotional Learning in America's Schools: Findings from the American Educator Panels (Hamilton, Doss, & Steiner, 2019).
www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2991.html

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which students develop such interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies as teamwork, social awareness, self-regulation, and emotional awareness. Although schools in the United States have always addressed these competencies, in recent years, the availability of resources to address SEL has expanded, and educators are increasingly adopting SEL-focused curricula, practices, and assessments in their classrooms and schools. This report presents findings from nationally representative samples of teachers and principals surveyed for the RAND Corporation's web-based American Educator Panels; these

educators responded to questions addressing their beliefs about the importance and value of SEL in schools, their approaches to promoting and measuring SEL, and their opinions regarding supports for improving SEL. The findings should be useful to developers of SEL-related resources such as curricula, assessments, and training programs, and to researchers, policymakers, and practitioners who are interested in understanding what kinds of supports and resources educators need.

17. [Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety at WestEd \(website\)](#)

This Center is funded by the U.S. Department of Education to provide technical assistance to states and districts in the areas of Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety. Their website includes searchable databases of State Profiles and Resources. They describe their work on their website as follows:

We have designed a three-tiered approach to technical assistance.

- *General: The center website, which serves as the ‘home’ for our general tier of technical assistance, will curate tools, resources, and publications, as well as evidence-based programs and practices, intended to address the field’s most important and urgent needs.*
- *Targeted: The center will also offer tailored professional learning and networks of practice of varying intensities and in consultation with thought leading subject matter experts.*
- *Intensive: The center will work in extended partnership with 1-2 SEAs or LEAs to design and implement strategies and initiatives related to the priorities of the center.*

We will disseminate what we learn together in our targeted and intensive relationships on this website, so that it is universally available.