

Integrating Social and Emotional Learning Throughout the School System

A Compendium of Resources for District Leaders

(Updated October 2021)

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CONTENTS

Introduction	1
About Social and Emotional Learning	1
About this Guide	3
Needs, Questions, And Related Resources	6
Big Picture: Embed Equity-Centered SEL In Schools	6
Plan: Create a Vision	8
Do: Engage School Communities	10
Do: Curate Professional Learning Tools	12
Study: Identify a Framework	15
Study: Assess Social and Emotional Well-Being and Choose Programming	17
Act: Implement Evidence-Based SEL Strategies and Programs	21
Appendix: Short List of Tools and Resources to Support Student Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practices	23

INTRODUCTION

This compendium provides resources for district leaders to consider as they seek to implement evidence-based supports to ensure that social and emotional learning (SEL) is fully integrated into the educational experience of their students, families, staff, and community. While they target the district level, many of these resources may be useful to school leaders as well.

ABOUT SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

SEL has traditionally been framed as the process in which individuals cultivate and apply the attitudes, beliefs, skills, and behaviors necessary to become fulfilled and engaged citizens. This interpretation of SEL focuses on recognizing emotions and reactions, setting and achieving goals, interacting with others in culturally responsive ways, and cultivating one's own identity and agency.¹

SEL can also support equity in schools. As the National Equity Project defines it, "educational equity means that each child receives what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential," which involves "ensuring equally high outcomes for all participants by removing the predictability of success or failures that currently correlates with any social or cultural factor."² When approached with an equity lens, SEL can provide a solid foundation for student self-efficacy, agency, identity safety, and an overall sense of belonging. Research suggests that students' social and emotional development can both advance and impede other aspects of their cognitive development and academic learning and that these domains of development are inextricably intertwined.³ By recognizing that all learning is

1 Weissberg, R. P., Durlak, J. A., Domitrovich, C. E., & Gullotta, T. P. (2015). Social and emotional learning: Past, present and future. In J. A. Durlak, C. E. Domitrovich, R. P. Weissberg, & T. P. Gullotta (Eds.), *Handbook of social and emotional learning: Research and practice* (pp. 3–19). Guilford Press.

2 National Equity Project. <https://www.nationalequityproject.org/education-equity-definition>

3 Pittman, K. (2017, July 24). *SEL, whole child education and student readiness: How do they connect?* HuffPost. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/sel-whole-child-education-and-student-readiness-how_b_59761518e4b0545a5c3101ef

social and emotional,⁴ educators can better understand their own identities and, in turn, prioritize understanding the lived experiences of the students in their care.⁵

Research conducted over decades has shown the importance of SEL in student achievement and attainment. As students strengthen their social and emotional competencies, they are more likely to do well academically, graduate on time, matriculate to and persist through college, and find fulfilling and steady employment.⁶ Beyond individual gains, there are also societal gains that come from strengthening students' social and emotional capacity. A report from The Education Trust states that "society needs human beings and citizens who are well and whole, who can work in diverse settings, and who work with others with differing perspectives to solve the social, economic, and environmental problems our country faces."⁷

Despite its importance, SEL can seem like "one more thing" added to a classroom teacher's plate. To ensure that an SEL focus is implemented with fidelity and holds intrinsic value for students and their families, district-level metrics must center the impact on student needs and experiences. In developing their metrics, district leaders should ensure their metrics emphasize not only student achievement but also other factors that affect both adults (e.g., well-being, sense of belonging, job satisfaction) and students (e.g., agency, self-efficacy, identity safety).

As with all learning in schools, SEL depends on more than just the actions of students. The first step of SEL implementation is ensuring that the adults in the school system — including administrators, teachers, and staff — have the guidance and time to examine how their own mindsets, assumptions, and behaviors contribute to or inhibit inclusive learning environments that promote strong SEL implementation. To have a meaningful and sustainable impact on students, adults must prioritize their own social and emotional growth and practice strategies and ways of being to improve the overall sense of belonging of other adults in their workplace, whether district or school. Too often, district leaders' strong sense of urgency to meet the goals and objectives tied to state and federal accountability can actually create barriers to adult and student learning and limit the co-creation of inclusive learning environments. District and school leaders must center decision-making on the students or student groups most marginalized (i.e. Black, indigenous, people of color) by the current system. Historically marginalizing policies, protocols, and practices must be shifted and enhanced to ensure every student has equitable access to identity-safe learning environments as well as to specific equity-centered SEL programs, curricula, and strategies.

Whether reopening schools after a global health crisis or kicking off a regular school year, the start of the school year is always challenging — but that challenge presents a real opportunity to focus on

4 Jones, S., & Kahn, K. (2017). *The evidence base for how we learn: Supporting students' social, emotional, and academic development* [Research brief]. The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development. https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/SEAD-Research-Brief-9.12_updated-web.pdf

5 Noddings, N. (2012). The caring relation in teaching. *Oxford Review of Education* 38(6), 771–781. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03054985.2012.745047?journalCode=core20>

6 Gabrieli C., Ansel, D., & Krachman, S. B. (2015). Ready to be counted. *Transforming Education*. https://transformingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/ReadytoBeCounted_Release.pdf

7 Duchesneau, N. (2020). *Social, emotional, and academic development through an equity lens*. The Education Trust. <https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Social-Emotional-and-Academic-Development-Through-an-Equity-Lens-August-6-2020.pdf>

equitable SEL rather than an excuse to delay or ignore it. When district and school leaders approach SEL with intentionality and thoughtfulness, they have a greater chance of achieving equitable outcomes for all students and of dismantling racist systems that might otherwise implement a sanitized version of SEL and further marginalize students of color.⁸ SEL rooted in equity recognizes the sociohistorical reality of current day schools and offers opportunities to recreate school spaces as learning environments designed for all students. To do this work effectively, district and school leaders must partner with youths, families, and communities to redefine SEL to recognize the strengths of students' lived experiences and backgrounds; to acknowledge and address issues of privilege and prejudice; and to work to dismantle racist systems, structures, and practices.

However, a focus on SEL can lead to inequitable outcomes if not implemented with intentionality. For example, SEL approaches can exacerbate inequity by lifting up only those student strengths defined by white, middle-class norms or by focusing narrowly on student deficits as opposed to student strengths.⁹ Similarly, SEL approaches can name student voice as a goal yet be implemented with rigid structures that center adult comfort rather than student self-efficacy and agency.

As such, district and school leaders must continuously examine the uses — and misuses — of SEL programs through the lens of equity and inclusiveness and regularly investigate issues of racism and discrimination in their systems' teaching practices, protocols, processes, and operating structures. This deep examination will limit instances in which students are rendered invisible because of adult perception, biases, and beliefs and expand the ability of all students to cultivate agency, shape their own identities as learners, and pursue the opportunities available to them.¹⁰ Attention to students' emotional safety through SEL will uncover the gifts students bring to the learning environment through their language, culture, and social values.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

To fully integrate SEL into the school system, schools need vision, guidance, and support from district leaders to ensure they have the resources, knowledge, and systems necessary to support implementation. Without these, SEL can become just another add-on, with little impact on student development; worse yet, it can be used to “blame the student” and further inequitable outcomes rather than create the conditions that allow all students to thrive. This guide roots SEL in a vision for equity, focusing attention on student needs and centering those needs in every decision made on their behalf. However, districts may be at different places in their SEL implementation process. As such, this guide categorizes a curated list of evidence-based resources according to the implementation need they address, beginning with a focus on equitable practices. The guide weaves equity through every aspect of SEL implementation — from setting a vision to reviewing and adjusting systems, practices, and

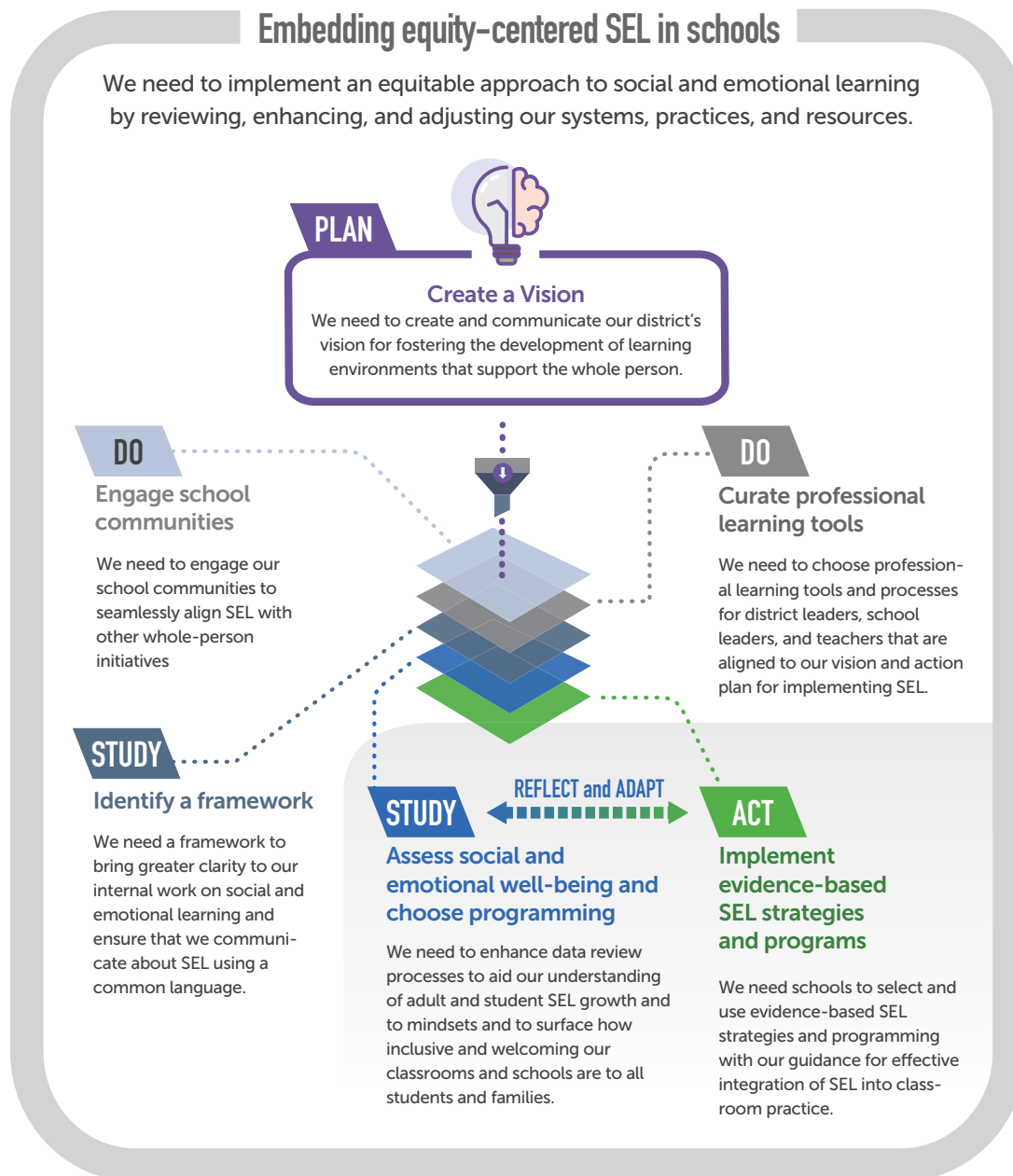
8 The Aspen Institute. (2018). Pursuing social and emotional development through a racial equity lens: A call to action. https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2018/05/Aspen-Institute_Framing-Doc_Call-to-Action.pdf?_ga=2.51378543.719278865.1596648998-411557965.1596648998

9 Love, B. L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom*. Beacon Press.

10 Morris, M. W. (2016). *Pushout: The criminalization of black girls in schools*. The New Press.

resources that ensure equitable experiences and outcomes for students in school. In the spirit of continuous improvement, this guide was developed with the understanding that SEL implementation is not a one-step or even linear process, but rather that each of the needs should be considered, addressed, and reviewed so that equity-centered SEL is authentically embraced as a viable and crucial school and classroom practice.

Figure 1. Implementation Needs in a Continuous Improvement Process



This approach has been structured as a Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) cycle, a continuous improvement process used to make and test change.¹¹

Quick Start to This Guide

- Review the Introduction, About SEL, About this Guide, and Table of Contents.
- Focus on resources that are most useful for your context, and consider exploring the original source provided for additional guidance.

Because the process of embedding equity-centered SEL in schools can and should be continuously improved over time, the implementation model has been structured as a PDSA cycle, a four-step process that is useful in guiding continuous improvement to test a change or practice in a real-world setting.¹² Each of the implementation categories includes

- a set of questions for district leaders to consider;
- research and evidence-based strategies to equitably address SEL and the environments that foster SEL throughout school systems;
- publicly available briefs, papers, podcasts, and videos that describe specific concepts, practices, and strategies and show them in action;
- tools that can assist district leaders with taking specific action toward SEL implementation; and
- source information and descriptions of the resources pulled directly from the linked source where possible as well as URLs for easy access.

Note that these resources and associated questions are intended to guide general SEL implementation, including overall school culture and climate, but do not address student mental health or trauma. To address those individualized needs, the Appendix contains targeted tools and resources that focus specifically on supporting students' mental health and fostering trauma-informed practices.

Finally, this list of relevant resources is not exhaustive, and new resources are under development. Therefore, this guide will be updated annually to include new resources and update URLs as needed.

11 Shakman, K., Wogan, D., Rodriguez, S., Boyce, J., & Shaver, D. (2020). *Continuous improvement in education: A toolkit for schools and districts*. REL 2021-014. Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2021014.pdf

12 Shakman et al. (2020).

NEEDS, QUESTIONS, AND RELATED RESOURCES

BIG PICTURE: EMBED EQUITY-CENTERED SEL IN SCHOOLS

We need to implement an equitable approach to SEL by reviewing, enhancing, and adjusting our systems, practices, and resources.

Questions to Guide Decision-Making

- What is our vision for equity?
- How do we work with our youths, families, and surrounding community to aid our understanding of their lived experiences in a way that builds on their cultural wealth to improve our policies and practices?
- How do our schools co-create social–emotional well-being with students and families?
- How do we identify and address school climate issues that inhibit or harm students’ identity safety (such as, but not limited to, racism, heterosexism, linguisticism, and anti-Semitism)?
- Are we taking steps to actively dismantle racism, bullying, and marginalization in our schools?
- How do racism, bullying, and marginalization manifest in daily teacher interactions and relationships with students, colleagues, and families?
- Do all schools employ culturally responsive pedagogies to ensure an inclusive approach for all students?
- Are our school environments — and especially our discipline practices and policies — inclusive and equitable?

Resources to Explore

-
- 🔍 [An Equity Toolkit for Inclusive Schools: Centering Youth Voice in School Change](#)
Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center
2017

This tool provides guidance for soliciting authentic input from students to pursue a more equitable school or district climate for all learners.

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- 🔍 [Applying an Equity Lens to Social, Emotional, and Academic Development](#)
Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center at Pennsylvania State University
Dena N. Simmons, Marc A. Brackett, and Nancy Adler
2018

This resource outlines five barriers to equitable SEL along with five opportunities to pursue more equitable outcomes for all students.

- 🔍 [Criteria for an Equitable School – Equity Audit](#)
Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium
2020

This tool provides questions to illuminate areas of strength and areas for growth to develop an equitable school community.

- 🔍 [Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education](#)
Learning for Justice
2014

This tool provides insight into how bias can arise in typical school-based environments and provides strategies for reducing and eliminating bias in these contexts.

- 🔍 [Culturally Responsive Teaching & the Brain Podcast](#)
Author Zaretta Hammond, Culturally Responsive Teaching & the Brain
2016

This podcast explores culturally responsive teaching and includes actionable strategies for implementation.

- 🔍 [Elevating Student Voice in Education](#)
Center for American Progress
Meg Benner, Catherine Brown, and Ashley Jeffrey
2019

This resource outlines strategies to increase authentic student voice in education at the school, district, and state levels.

- 🔍 [Equitable Learning Library](#)
Building Equitable Learning Environments (BELE) Network

These resources are intended to help educators, families, and policymakers create more equitable and empowering learning environments.

- 🔍 [Equity & Social and Emotional Learning: A Cultural Analysis](#)
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
Robert J. Jagers, Deborah Rivas-Drake, and Teresa Borowski
2018

This resource explores how cultural contexts can inform an equity-centered approach to SEL.

🔍 [Integrating a Focus on Equity Into Social and Emotional Learning](#)
Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest
2019

This resource offers suggestions for bridging SEL and equity.

🔍 [One World Posters](#)
Learning For Justice
2021

This resource provides downloadable posters that can be used to frame conversations about difference, launch a districtwide focus on identity, or serve as personal reminders to the district leadership to lead with an equity lens.

🔍 [Pursuing Social and Emotional Development Through a Racial Equity Lens: A Call to Action](#)
The Aspen Institute 2018

This resource explores the complementary nature of racial equity and social and emotional development and offers suggestions for using a racial equity framing to pursue whole-child development.

🔍 [Social, Emotional, and Academic Development Through an Equity Lens](#)
Education Trust
2020

This resource outlines action items for school and district leaders to develop a more equitable approach to social, emotional, and academic development by focusing on the sociopolitical, district, and classroom factors that influence student experiences.

PLAN: CREATE A VISION


We need to create and communicate our district’s vision for fostering the development of learning environments that support the whole person.

Questions to Guide Decision-Making


- What is our current vision for our graduates? How might we enhance this vision to fully include students’ SEL, agency, identity safety, and self-efficacy for future success?
- What competencies do we believe are essential for the success of all students in K–12 education, in higher education, in careers, and as engaged citizens?
- Who does well academically and behaviorally in our schools? Who does not? What disparities do we see in the data when we disaggregate by identity characteristics (e.g., race, gender identity, gender expression, ethnicity, ability)? How have we analyzed the root causes of these disparities?
- How does our vision for equity-centered SEL align with what we know about academic and behavioral outcomes for students in our district? How might our vision enable our organization to surface this intersection of current and desired outcomes as we make decisions daily?

- To what extent are we advocating for students and their communities to achieve success in our classrooms and schools? What does this advocacy look like and sound like? How might the communities most marginalized historically in our district feel about our approach to advocating?
- Does our vision include the systems, structures, and practices to support the creation of learning environments that focus on successful outcomes for students who are historically marginalized?
- Are our school environments — and especially our discipline practices and policies — inclusive and equitable?
- Is our vision co-created with stakeholders? Does it include the aspirations, strengths, and needs of students and families in the district? (See “Do: Engage School Communities” below.)
- How will we communicate our vision with families, students, staff, and other stakeholders?


Resources to Explore

 [“...and they cared”: How to Create Better, Safer Learning Environments for Girls of Color](#)
National Women’s Law Center (NWLC)
2020


This tool provides a checklist for school and district leaders to directly address disparate outcomes for all students by shifting policy, practice, and communication.

 [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#)
New York State Education Department (NYSED)
2019


This resource provides a framework for district-level creation of student-centered learning environments that affirm student identity, support academic self-efficacy, nurture student agency, and cultivate critical thinking.

 [District Resource Center](#)
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
2017

These tools include resources, best practices, and activities for districts that are planning, implementing, and continuously improving SEL initiatives.

 [Enacting Social-Emotional Learning: Lessons from “Outlier Schools” in California’s CORE Districts](#)
Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)
Heather Hough, Julie Marsh, and Susan McKibben
2018

This resource discusses challenges, successes, and practices gleaned from schools with promising SEL student outcomes across eight large urban California districts.

 [Social Emotional Learning District Implementation and Professional Development Guidance](#)
Minnesota Department of Education
2015

This resource outlines steps for districts to consider around SEL planning, implementation, and professional development.

DO: ENGAGE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES


We need to engage our school communities to seamlessly align SEL with other whole-person focus areas.

Questions to Guide Decision-Making

Note: The school community should be included as a crucial decision-maker as you develop your vision.

- Who are our school community stakeholders? How do we engage them? How do we know if our engagement is useful and meaningful to our stakeholders?
- How do we use data to inform our stakeholders and to understand how they experience our schools?
- What concerns do these stakeholders have with implementing SEL, and how can we address those concerns in a way that is authentic and meaningful to them?
- How might we communicate the importance of serving the whole person using strategies and ways of being, such as equity-centered SEL, trauma-informed practices, restorative practices, and other whole-person initiatives, in our district and its schools?
- Do our students and families feel a sense of belonging and agency in their schools? Are there disparities in feelings of belonging and agency by race, color, national origin, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status (SES), or religion? Do we have engagement strategies in place to both understand what drives these disparities and overcome them?
- How might we expand our direct knowledge of the lived experiences of historically marginalized groups?
- How do schools in our district and our district leaders meaningfully and regularly engage with students and families within and outside of the school context; how do they build authentic relationships with those from historically marginalized groups?

Resources to Explore

 [Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships \(Version 2\)](#)
Karen L. Mapp and Eyal Bergman
2019

This resource is a research-based framework focused on family-school partnerships and will aid the design of family engagement strategies, policies, and programming.

🔍 [From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development](#)

Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development
2019

This resource synthesizes research, policy, and practice to establish an agenda for whole-child development.

🔍 [Guide to Schoolwide SEL: Family Partnerships](#)

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
2019

This tool offers guidance for authentic communication between school and family on planning and implementing SEL.

🔍 [Including Voice in Education: Addressing Equity Through Student and Family Voice in Classroom Learning](#)

Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific
2020

This resource offers strategies for embedding student and family voices into the classroom to drive equitable outcomes.

🔍 [Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships & Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools - A Guide for Educators](#)

Schott Foundation, Advancement Project, American Federation of Teachers, and National Education Association
2014

This toolkit helps educators understand restorative practices and how to support identity-safe learning environments through community building and conflict resolution that centers relationships.

🔍 [School Climate Strategy Resource Guide](#)

New Jersey Department of Education & Rutgers University
2018

This guide presents strategies, "look fors," and supplemental resources to bolster school culture and climate across prosocial relationships, safety and sense of belonging, and pedagogical practices.

🔍 ["What Does the Research Say?"](#)

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
2020

These resources outline the long-term impact of SEL on students' academic, interpersonal, and health outcomes.

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- 🔍 [Serving the Whole Person: An Alignment and Coherence Guide for Local Education Agencies](#)
WestEd
Natalie Walrond

This guide helps local education agency (LEA) leaders implement conditions for equitable learning and development for students, families, and educators through their work to improve the alignment and coherence of their whole-person initiatives.

- 🔍 [Social and Emotional Learning](#)
The Future of Children
2017

These resources, written by experts in the field, discuss the role of SEL in a variety of academic and extracurricular contexts.

- 🔍 [The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning](#)
Center for Benefit–Cost Studies in Education at Teachers College, Columbia University
Clive Belfield, Brooks Bowden, Alli Klapp, Henry Levin, Robert Shand, and Sabine Zander
2015

This resource investigates the economic return on investment of six SEL curricula.

- 🔍 [Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education](#)
Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific
2016

This tool provides resources for school staff to build relationships with families and community members and to support family well-being, strong parent–child relationships, and students’ ongoing learning.

DO: CURATE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TOOLS

We need to choose professional learning tools and processes for district leaders, school leaders, and teachers that are aligned to our vision and action plan for implementing SEL.

Questions to Guide Decision-Making

- What goals or outcomes do we hope to achieve through professional learning?
- How can we build on the existing knowledge of our teachers and staff?
- What data collection system/process do we use to determine professional learning needs?
- Based on our review of disaggregated data, what professional learning opportunities are needed for adults to embed equity-centered SEL in the school day?
- Have teachers and district or campus leaders been given the resources and supports that will allow them to model, teach and reflect on their own SEL?
- In what ways will this professional learning address issues of racism, discrimination, bias, bullying, and teacher mindsets that can negatively impact student self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and agency?

- What professional learning tools or platforms (e.g., professional learning communities, online modules) are most appropriate for our audience and the unique context of our district (e.g., distance learning during a global health crisis)?
- With what frequency can we provide professional learning, coaching, and/or other avenues for advancing adults' competency in equity-centered SEL programs and practices?
- Who is our target audience for professional learning, and how might we add to our considerations to expand that audience? For example, should we create/curate resources for all stakeholders (e.g., district and school administrators, students, teachers, families, support staff)? Which groups of students or staff would benefit most from a streamlined focus on a particular role? Who would benefit most from our attention to all stakeholders?

Resources to Explore

🔍 [Guidance on Culturally Responsive-Sustaining School Reopenings: Centering Equity to Humanize the Process of Coming Back Together](#)

Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools at NYU-Steinhardt
David E. Kirkland
2020

This resource offers strategies and considerations to center equity when preparing to return to school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

🔍 [Incorporating Social and Personal Competencies Into Classroom Instruction and Educator Effectiveness: A Toolkit for Tennessee Teachers and Administrators](#)

Tennessee Department of Education, in collaboration with the Center on Great Teachers & Leaders and the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center
2015

This tool helps teachers and administrators improve student social and personal competency skills and to encourage positive social behaviors.

🔍 [Integrating Social, Emotional and Academic Development: An Action Guide for School Leadership Teams](#)

The Aspen Institute
2019

This resource provides guidance on how school teams can integrate social, emotional, and academic development throughout the entire school day.

🔍 [Learning for Justice - Webinar Series](#)

Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance)

This resource includes videos that dive deep into specific topics related to creating diverse, inclusive, and equitable schools.

🔍 [Preparing Teachers to Support Social and Emotional Learning: A Case Study of San Jose State University and Lakewood Elementary School](#)

Learning Policy Institute
Hanna Melnick and Lorea Martinez
2019

This resource provides case studies of 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.

🔍 [Social Emotional Learning and Equity](#)
National Equity Project

This resource supports an equitable approach to professional learning, outlining recommendations aligned with common obstacles to pursuing equitable SEL, including implications for professional learning.

🔍 [Social and Emotional Learning in Washington State Schools: Building Foundations and Strategies](#)
Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

This resource includes videos that constitute a professional development module on integrating and embedding culturally responsive and trauma-informed SEL.

🔍 [Transforming Education: Toolkits](#)

These tools provide accessible, actionable guidance on SEL competencies, trauma-informed SEL, and teacher SEL and can be directly used for professional development in schools.

🔍 [Understanding Implicit Bias: What Educators Should Know](#)

American Federation of Teachers
Cheryl Staats
2015

This resource outlines the role of implicit bias in teaching and offers suggestions to mitigate its impact.

🔍 [Whole-Child Design](#)

Turnaround for Children

This tool enables school teams to reflect on the existing systems, structures, and supports that bolster whole-child development.


STUDY: IDENTIFY A FRAMEWORK

We need a framework to bring greater clarity to our internal work on SEL and ensure that we communicate about SEL using a common language.


Questions to Guide Decision-Making

- How do we use quantitative and qualitative strategies to measure student agency, self-efficacy, belonging, and identity safety?
- What is communicated in the data regarding the experiences of students in our district? How do they report belonging, identity safety, and agency?
- Based on the data, what competencies are the most important for student learning? How have district leaders and other stakeholders provided feedback to inform the chosen competencies?
- Do the competencies align with our vision to support the whole person?
- Are the competencies defined in ways that recognize the assets of students from all cultural backgrounds? What professional learning do we need to engage in as district leaders to support the selection of an equity-centered framework that focuses on student self-efficacy, agency, cultural knowledge, and the need for adult critical self-reflection?
- What available framework aligns with our vision and with our community priorities for authentic, responsive, equity-centered SEL?
- Do we use a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to organize structures, processes, and practices that communicate the importance of SEL as a strong foundation for student academic and behavioral success?

Resources to Explore

-
-  [Design Principles for Schools: Putting the Science of Learning and Development Into Action](#)
Learning Policy Institute & Turnaround for Children
2021

This resource is an organizing framework that guides redesign of learning environments for students based on five elements: (1) positive developmental relationships; (2) environments filled with safety and belonging; (3) rich learning experiences and knowledge development; (4) development of skills, habits, and mindsets; and (5) integrated support systems.

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-  [CPS Equity Framework: Targeted Universalism Tool](#)
Chicago Public Schools Office of Equity
2019

This tool can support the seamless integration of an MTSS, guiding leaders to consider diverse student experiences while developing universal interventions.

🔍 [Explore SEL](#)

Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning (EASEL) Laboratory at the Harvard Graduate School of Education

This tool categorizes and compares relationships among common SEL frameworks.

🔍 [Identifying, Defining, and Measuring Social and Emotional Competencies](#)

American Institutes for Research

Juliette Berg, David Osher, Michelle R. Same, Elizabeth Nolan, Deaweh Benson, and Naomi Jacobs
2017

This resource provides an overview of the major frameworks that identify SEL competencies and explores the similarities and differences between frameworks.

🔍 [Introduction to the Taxonomy Project: Tools for Selecting & Aligning SEL Frameworks](#)

Stephanie Jones, Rebecca Bailey, Katharine Brush, and Bryan Nelson
2019

This resource provides guidance on how users can use Explore SEL to select an appropriate SEL framework based on their needs.

🔍 [Integrating Social & Emotional Learning Within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports to Advance Equity: SEL MTSS Toolkit for State & District Leaders](#)

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), & American Institutes for Research (AIR)
2021

This resource addresses key questions about using an equity lens to integrate SEL into an MTSS framework and incorporates practical lessons learned through a community of practice across 10 state education agencies.

🔍 [Measuring SEL: Frameworks](#)

The Establishing Practical Social and Emotional Competence Assessments of Preschool to High School Students project at the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

These resources provide guidance to teams on how to compare and select frameworks in alignment with prioritized focus areas.

🔍 [Teaching Social-Emotional Competencies within a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports \(PBIS\) Framework](#)

OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
Susan Barrett, Lucille Eber, Kent McIntosh, Kelly Perales, and Natalie Romer
2018

This resource offers recommendations for integrating SEL into an existing PBIS framework rather than implementing a separate initiative.

STUDY: ASSESS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AND CHOOSE PROGRAMMING

We need to enhance data review processes to aid our understanding of adult and student SEL growth and mindsets and to surface how inclusive and welcoming our classrooms and schools are to all students and families.

Questions to Guide Decision-Making

Prior to choosing a program, ask the following:

- What students or student groups are the most marginalized academically, socially, and emotionally in our district (e.g., based on data about attendance, discipline, state-mandated test scores, special education)?
- How have we examined historical data to uncover patterns over the decades that contribute to disparities in schools today? Have we supplemented quantitative data collected with qualitative strategies, such as interviews and focus groups?
- To what extent do the patterns reflect academic growth by race over the course of time? What is the pace of that growth within and between racial groups?
- How might we build upon the assets of the student groups who have experienced faster or greater growth?
- To what extent are we using students' cultural assets to inform district-level curricular programming decisions?
- How do we gather data to assess student agency, self-efficacy, identity safety, and belonging?
- How might we choose a program or programs that supplement a clearly articulated, district-supported focus on implementation of humanizing practices across our schools that center student social, emotional, and academic growth?

Prior to choosing a measure, ask the following:

- What are our intended outcomes?
- What competencies do we want to measure?
- Why do we want to assess these competencies?
- Who benefits from our assessment of these competencies?
- How do we want to assess these competencies (e.g., student self-report, teacher report, performance measure)?

Prior to program implementation, ask the following:

- How might we gather and provide formative feedback to teachers and staff to improve instructional practices (i.e., pedagogical and curricular decisions)?
- How might we provide summative feedback to evaluate the impact of SEL embedded in instructional practices?
- How might we invite teachers and school leaders to reflect on their philosophy of education and how personal philosophies can impact data and student achievement even when intentions are good?

Upon identifying a measure, ask the following:

- Has the measure been validated for our intended use?
- Are the questions/tasks able to measure student assets?
- Are the questions/tasks culturally responsive, recognizing the assets and gifts all students bring to the classroom and school? What systems do we have in place to ensure results are interpreted through a strengths-based and equitable lens?
- Will the measure provide us with the data needed to assess and monitor disproportion in how students are succeeding academically, socially, and emotionally in our district?
- How are we organized to build capacity for data use and interpretation, including the disaggregation of data?
 - How will our disaggregation of the data help district leaders, school leaders, and teachers open doors historically closed to some student groups and opened for others?
 - How will our disaggregation of the data illustrate and highlight the lived experiences of all students in our classrooms and schools?
 - How will we critically examine the impacts of our pedagogical and curricular decisions?
- Who will have access to these data, and how will they use these data to improve educator practice?
- What other data should we collect to create a clearer picture of school supports in place to address student SEL (e.g., adult SEL, classroom practices, school environment, district office environment)?
- How will we communicate to families, students, and other stakeholders decisions informed by our data review?

Resources to Explore

🔍 [A Review of Instruments for Measuring Social and Emotional Learning Skills Among Secondary School Students](#)

Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands

Joshua Cox, Brandon Foster, and David Bamat

2019

This resource compiles SEL measurement tools that are specifically designed for secondary students.

🔍 [Are You Ready to Assess Social and Emotional Learning and Development?](#)

American Institutes for Research

2019

This tool encourages a “Stop, Think, Act” approach to help education leaders, practitioners, and policymakers decide whether and how to assess conditions for SEL and the development of social and emotional competencies.

🔍 [Culturally Responsive Data Literacy](#)
National Center for Systemic Improvement
Saroja Warner
2021

This tool provides a way of thinking about data use in the classroom to surface the often-untapped assets that students bring to the learning space.

🔍 [Encouraging Social and Emotional Learning in the Context of New Accountability](#)
Learning Policy Institute
Hanna Melnick, Channa M. Cook-Harvey, and Linda Darling-Hammond
2017

This resource discusses the measurement of SEL and school climate in state plans for the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

🔍 [Measuring School Climate and Social and Emotional Learning and Development: A Navigation Guide for States and Districts](#)
Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and Education Counsel
2019

This resource documents considerations for selecting SEL or school climate measures and how to use these measures.

🔍 [Measuring SEL: SEL Assessment Guide](#)
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
2018

This tool offers a catalog of assessment instruments and outlines the purpose of assessing SEL, selecting an assessment tool, and acting on data.

🔍 [Penn State Issue Brief: SEL Assessment to Support Effective Social Emotional Learning Practices at Scale](#)
The Pennsylvania State University
Clark McKown and Beth Herman
2020

This resource explores the role of assessment — of student competencies, adult practices, and school climate — in supporting high-quality SEL at scale.

🔍 [RAND Education Assessment Finder](#)
RAND Corporation
Laura S. Hamilton, Brian M. Stecher, Jonathan Schweig, and Garrett Baker
2018

This tool enables users to select assessments intended to measure K–12 students' interpersonal, intrapersonal, and higher order cognitive competencies.

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- 🔍 [School Climate Survey Compendium](#)
National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments
2018

This tool offers a catalog of student, teacher, staff, family, administrator, and community surveys in prekindergarten, elementary school, middle school, high school, and higher education environments to identify and assess their conditions for learning.

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- 🔍 [School and Classroom Climate Measures: Considerations for Use by State and Local Education Leaders](#)
RAND Corporation
Jonathan Schweig, Laura S. Hamilton, and Garrett Baker
2019

This resource outlines measurement considerations in the development and use of school and classroom climate measures.

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- 🔍 [Social and Emotional Learning Assessment Guidance](#)
Minnesota Department of Education

This resource explores the considerations involved in preparing for and implementing SEL measurement.

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- 🔍 [Turnaround For Children Toolbox: Measurement](#)
Turnaround For Children

These measurement tools focus on whole-child design and student well-being, inviting school teams to assess the systems of support that bolster each.

ACT: IMPLEMENT EVIDENCE-BASED SEL STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS

We need schools to select and use evidence-based SEL strategies and programming with our guidance for effective integration of SEL into classroom practice.

If choosing programs, please also review the “Assess Social and Emotional Well-Being and Choose Programming” section of this guide

Questions to Guide Decision-Making

- What programs and practices that align with our vision for equity-centered SEL are currently being implemented in schools in our district? Which of those have been shown to be effective for all students and can be scaled to other schools?
- Which potential programs and practices are aligned to our vision for equity-centered SEL?
- Which potential programs and practices are aligned to the competencies our district is focused on?
- Which programs will aid our district to embed equity-centered SEL in a way that addresses student belonging, self-efficacy, agency, and identity safety?
- What additional support, guidance, and/or resources do school leaders, teachers, and staff need to implement equity-centered SEL programs and practices in ways that are asset based and culturally responsive and that attend to the self-efficacy of students in our classrooms and schools?

Resources to Explore

[CASEL Program Guide](#)

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

This resource evaluates SEL programs based on their research evidence and provides guidance on selection and implementation.

[Evidence for ESSA: Evidence-Based Social-Emotional Learning Programs](#)

Center for Research and Reform in Education, Johns Hopkins University

This tool lists SEL programs that can be used to meet ESSA standards and offers the option to identify programs by social, emotional, and academic focus areas.

[Head & Heart: An Expanded Approach to Meeting Students’ Needs as Schools Reopen](#)

Achievement Network and Transforming Education
2020

This resource provides school reopening guidance that integrates SEL and academics through a racial equity lens.

🔍 [Navigating Social and Emotional Learning from the Inside Out – Looking Inside and Across 33 Leading SEL Programs: A Practical Resource for Schools and OST Providers; Revised and Expanded 2nd Edition \(Preschool and Elementary Focus\)](#)

Harvard Graduate School of Education

Stephanie M. Jones, Katharine E. Brush, Thelma Ramirez, et. al.

2021

This resource is an updated and expanded guide that provides an overview of 33 evidence-based SEL programs for elementary schools and out-of-school time (OST) providers with recommendations for achieving equitable SEL and practical application in schools.

🔍 [Revised SEL Integration Approach](#)

Transforming Education

2020

This tool offers classroom teachers updated guidance on how to integrate SEL into all aspects of the school and classroom experience.

🔍 [Social & Emotional Learning Teacher Practices](#)

Education First and NoVo Foundation

2018

This resource includes videos and written stories to share how educators across the country incorporate SEL into their classrooms and schools.

🔍 [Social and Emotional Learning Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act](#)

RAND Corporation

Sean Grant, Laura S. Hamilton, Stephani L. Wrabel, Celia J. Gomez, Anamarie A. Whitaker, Jennifer T. Leschitz, Fatih Unlu, Emilio R. Chavez-Herrerías, Garrett Baker, Mark Barrett, Mark Harris, and Alyssa Ramos

2017

This resource outlines SEL interventions that address ESSA's evidence requirements, along with evidence on expected outcomes.

🔍 [What This Looks Like](#)

Edutopia and the Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development

This resource provides videos that show how schools and classrooms across the country are supporting their students' social, emotional, and academic growth.

APPENDIX: SHORT LIST OF TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES

Recognizing the ongoing needs of students and adults in schools, we offer the tools and resources below to support a focus on personal well-being. The resources can aid district leaders to effectively support personal well-being, unique mental health needs, and individuals who have experienced trauma.

🔍 [Advocate for BIPOC Mental Health: Webinars to Understand and Practice Self-Care and Address Challenges Students Face](#)

Learning for Justice

2021

🔍 [Educator Resilience and Trauma-Informed Self-Care: Self-Assessment and Planning Tool](#)

Center for Great Teachers & Leaders at the American Institutes for Research

2020

🔍 [Trauma-Informed SEL Toolkit](#)

Transforming Education

2020

🔍 [National School Mental Health Curriculum: Guidance and Best Practices for States, Districts, and Schools](#)

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network Coordinating Office (MHTTC NCO)

2019

🔍 [Best Practices in Universal Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Screening: An Implementation Guide](#)

School Mental Health Collaborative

Natalie Romer, Nathaniel von der Embse, Katie Eklund, Stephen Kilgus, Kelly Perales, Joni Williams Splett, Shannon Suldo, and David Wheeler

2019

🔍 [The Future of Healing: Shifting From Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement](#)
San Francisco State University
Shawn Ginwright
2018

🔍 [Mental Health Practices Toolkit: Mental Health Resources](#)
Transcend Education
2020

🔍 [Trauma-Sensitive Schools: Training Package](#)
National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments
2018