



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

# UPDATE: Social Emotional Learning in Washington State

*2023*

Authorizing Legislation: [RCW 28A.300.477](#)

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	4
Background .....	5
Committee Membership and Meetings .....	6
About SEL.....	6
SEL Centered in Equity .....	7
Update Status.....	8
State of Implementation .....	8
Stages of SEL Implementation .....	8
District Practices .....	8
Positive Impacts Reported.....	9
Community Engagement .....	9
An Interdisciplinary Approach to SEL.....	10
Statewide Coordination and Partnerships.....	11
EOGOAC Joint Committee Meeting.....	11
Professional Educator Standards Board .....	12
Social Emotional Development Institutes and the Mitigating Effects of Intergenerational Trauma .....	12
SEL Professional Learning Network.....	13
State Leaders of Career Development Network.....	13
Collaborative States Initiative .....	13
Recommendations.....	15
1: Build Statewide Infrastructure for Equitable Social Emotional Learning.....	15
Recommendation 1A.....	15
Recommendation 1B .....	15
Recommendation 1C.....	16
Recommendation 1D.....	16
2: Cross-Community and Cross-Agency Alignment .....	17
Recommendation 2A.....	17
Recommendation 2B .....	17
Recommendation 2C.....	18
Recommendation 2D.....	18
3: Build Adult SEL Capacity.....	18
Recommendation 3A.....	18

Recommendation 3B .....	19
Recommendation 3C .....	19
Recommendation 3D .....	19
Recommendation 3E .....	19
4: Develop Family and Community Partnerships for Creating Safe and Supportive Learning Environments through SEL .....	20
Recommendation 4A .....	20
5: Develop Safe-Guards Around Assessing SEL .....	20
Recommendation 5A .....	20
Recommendation 5B .....	21
Conclusion & Next Steps .....	22
Acknowledgements .....	23
References .....	24
Appendices .....	28
Appendix A .....	28
Committee Membership .....	28
Appendix B .....	29
Governance and Structure .....	29
Committee Meetings .....	29
Process for Recommendations .....	29
Appendix C .....	29
SEL and Equity Subcommittee .....	29
Education Preparation Programs Subcommittee .....	30
K–12 Standards Alignment Subcommittee .....	30
Legal Notice .....	31

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2019, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 5082 (SB 5082), which directed the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to establish a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Committee to build upon the work of the previous Social Emotional Learning Indicators (SELI) Workgroup. SEL is a process through which individuals build awareness and skills in managing emotions, setting goals, establishing relationships, and making responsible decisions that support success in school and in life (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2019). The purpose of the SEL Advisory Committee (or “the Committee”) is to promote and expand SEL implementation.

The Committee met monthly over the course of the 2022–23 school year to discuss the topics that impact social emotional learning in Washington. Committee meeting topics included but were not limited to discussion on the current state of SEL in Washington; the impact of SEL on students, families, communities, and educators; SEL assessment and implementation evaluation; the intersectionality with Special Education, multi-tiered system of supports, behavioral and mental health, and school climate; and the need for SEL funding, adult SEL capacity building, and SEL founded in equity.

From these topics, the Committee prioritized five areas for legislative action:

1. Building Statewide Infrastructure for Equitable SEL.
2. Increasing Cross-community and Cross-agency Alignment in SEL Efforts.
3. Building Adult SEL Capacity.
4. Developing Partnerships with Families and Communities for Creating Safe and Supportive Learning Environments through SEL.
5. Developing Safeguards around SEL Assessment.

The order of the recommendations does not show a level of importance or a sequence of steps, but instead reflects an interconnectedness in both priority and necessity.

For each recommendation, the Committee offers relevant context and rationale to inform decision making. Many recommendations carry over from previous years’ report recommendations that have not yet been acted upon.

# BACKGROUND

The Washington Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Committee (referred to in this report as “the Committee” and “Committee”) was established in 2019 through [Senate Bill 5082](#) (SB 5082) to address the growing body of evidence that shows the need for improving not only a student’s academic abilities, but also their social and emotional competencies which are critical to every child’s development. SB 5082—codified in [Revised Code of Washington \(RCW\) 28A.300.477](#)—requires the Committee to submit a progress report to the legislature annually beginning June 1, 2021. The progress report must include accomplishments, state-level data regarding implementation of SEL, and the identification of systemic barriers or policy changes necessary to promote and expand SEL.

This report references Washington’s SEL Framework which outlines a shared, statewide approach to implementing SEL at the district and school level. The SEL framework, which is part of the Washington State Social Emotional Learning Implementation Guide, offers this shared vision through four guiding principles and three essential elements for successful SEL implementation.

The framework commits to four guiding principles:

- **Equity:** Ensure each child receives what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential.
- **Cultural Responsiveness:** Draw upon students’ unique strengths and experiences while orienting learning in relation to individuals’ cultural context.
- **Universal Design:** Provide a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people by removing barriers in the curriculum.
- **Trauma-Informed Practices:** Recognize the unique strengths and challenges of children and youth in light of the adversities they face (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2019).

The framework has the following three essential elements:

1. **Create conditions to support students’ SEL** by creating a positive school climate and culture; linking SEL to existing school policies and practices; focusing on classroom-based approaches that promote SEL; selecting and implementing evidence-based SEL practices; and using data for continuous improvement.
2. **Collaborate with families, communities, and expanded learning opportunity providers** in the design, implementation, and review of local plans to integrate SEL in schools and communities.
3. **Build adult capacity** and adult SEL competencies that can be demonstrated and modeled. Creating a SEL leadership team, developing a vision statement, conducting a needs and readiness assessment, and creating an implementation plan will ensure that professional learning is targeted and educators can support the needs of all students (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2019).

## Committee Membership and Meetings

RCW 28A.300.477 set minimum Committee membership. A complete list of current Committee members, the co-chairs, subcommittee members, and OSPI staff are in Appendix A.

The Committee met monthly during 2022–23. Meeting agendas and notes may be found on the [OSPI SEL webpage](#). The Committee meetings are open to the public to attend and public comment time is allotted. To gather more public comment, a [public comment form](#) was added to the OSPI SEL webpage for anyone to access and submit at any time. Appendix B provides more information about the governance, structure, and processes of the committee.

Five subcommittees worked on the specific tasks identified in the legislation or were identified as needs in the field. More information about the work of the subcommittees is found in Appendix C.

## About SEL

The U.S. Department of Education reports that there was a 70% increase in public school students seeking mental health services during the pandemic (United States Department of Education, 2022). In Washington, the most recent Healthy Youth Survey reports an average of 39% of middle and high school students feeling depressed or sad most days. Additionally, an average of 39% of middle and high school students report that they felt so hopeless that they stopped doing their usual activities. Finally, 1 in 5 students in this age group reported that they have seriously considered attempting suicide (Washington State Department of Health, 2021). An increase in SEL supports for students can help.

SEL reduces emotional distress, helping students build self-awareness and reflect on their interactions with others. SEL forms a foundation for classroom learning; improves students' academic performance, citizenship, and health-related behaviors; and predicts important life outcomes such as on-time high school graduation, college degree attainment, and greater emotional well-being into adulthood (Durlak et al., 2010).

When educators embed and model SEL, students are more engaged and develop the skills needed to be lifelong learners, engaged community members, and successful adults who can collaborate, problem-solve, and work through conflict with colleagues and peers in the world. The adaptive skills learned through SEL benefit all students when educators embed them into a school community that intentionally provides opportunities for students to develop the competencies that they require to be successful. It also offers a greater sense of belonging.

Short-Term Outcomes of SEL:

- Improved academic success.
- More meaningful connections with educators and peers.
- Decreased emotional distress, stress, and depression.
- Fewer behavior incidents.

Long-Term Outcomes of SEL:

- Increased college and career readiness.
- Increased ability to effectively manage stress.
- Higher levels of empathy and teamwork.
- Lower drug use and fewer incidents of criminal activity.

## **SEL Centered in Equity**

Research shows that inclusive and collaborative learning experiences that honor and value students' cultural assets and diversity benefit educators and students. These culturally affirming experiences contribute to building an accepting, inclusive, and thriving learning community. Practices that harm, limit, and exclude students in their schools still exist and are barriers to educational success, particularly for students of color, students with trauma histories, students with disabilities, and students who identify with LGBTQIA+ communities.

*"A student's learning is inextricably linked to their social emotional wellbeing and how they see themselves in their school community."*

*—Sarah Butcher, Committee Co-Chair*

Without equity-focused policies, mindsets, and programs, biases (whether implicit or explicit and at the individual, educator, school, district, state, or society level) will "continue to unfairly and unjustly marginalize some students" (Duchesneau, 2020). Districts and schools must work to create and implement a system of support which is grounded in an actionable and equitable framework. Part of the work in schools must be to partner with families and communities to understand how they talk about these skills and how they value them. By doing so, districts and schools create conditions that enable all students to build on their unique assets and abilities and reach their full potential in school, work, and life.

# UPDATE STATUS

## State of Implementation

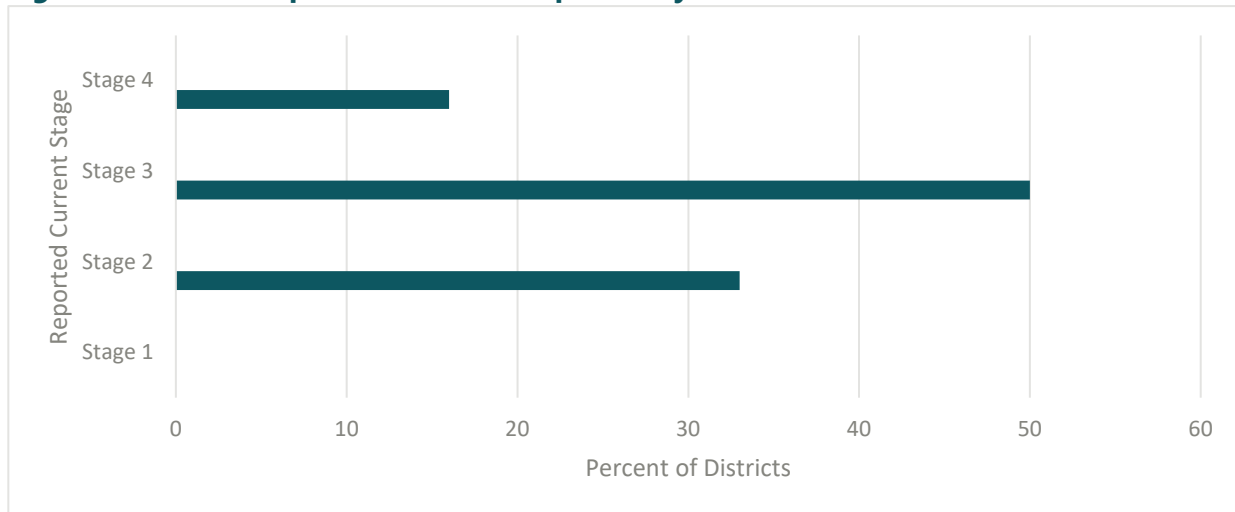
### Stages of SEL Implementation

The OSPI SEL team surveyed WA K–12 school districts beginning in April 2023 regarding SEL implementation and SEL impact. Data shows that most respondents indicated they were beyond Stage 1 and were implementing SEL in at least some of their schools.

#### Stages of Implementation

- **Stage 1:** Setting the Foundations: Developing the readiness to implement SEL.
- **Stage 2:** Building Capacity to Deliver SEL: SEL implemented in the last year as a pilot or in a few schools.
- **Stage 3:** Intermediate Implementation: Implementation of SEL (SEL curriculum) broadly across the district.
- **Stage 4:** Full Implementation: Implementing SEL (SEL curriculum) in all or most schools.

**Figure 1: State of Implementation as Reported by Districts**



**Source:** OSPI SEL Curriculum Grant Survey and SEL Implementation and Professional Development Survey, May 2, 2023

\*Note: although respondents did represent varied locations, sizes, and settings of districts across WA, the responses were limited. The data may not be representative of non-responsive districts.

### District Practices

Additional information gathered from the district surveys indicated that there were key practices happening broadly (over 60%) across the responding districts that align with the Washington SEL Framework. Those were:



- Creating a collaborative vision and goals for SEL implementation.
- Reviewing data sources (for example: climate survey, attendance, referrals) to continue to strengthen SEL policies and practices.
- Providing ongoing support/coaching on SEL (SEL curriculum) implementation.
- Providing continuous professional development.
- Building adult knowledge (for example: anti-bias training or culturally sustaining and trauma-informed practices).
- Building foundational knowledge on SEL curriculum.

The following step was happening in half of the district respondents reported:

- Connecting with students and families to identify SEL needs.

Finally, one third or fewer respondents indicated the following steps:

- Providing professional development opportunities for support staff (bus drivers, paraeducators, food service, etc.).
- Adjusting SEL implementation to create a continuous improvement process.

## Positive Impacts Reported

Some district survey respondents reported positive impacts associated with SEL implementation:

- Fewer referrals for behavior; fewer students screening in for needing SEL supports.
- Increase in attendance.
- Increase in grades.
- A decrease of discipline referrals.
- An increase in positive responses on the climate survey of families/teachers.

## Community Engagement

During the end of the 2022 school year, the Committee invited educator panelists to share their experiences, challenges, and educator and student needs. The information gained from the panelists influenced Committee's topics and priorities moving forward.

Questions asked of the panelists include:

1. What has it been like to support student SEL and academic learning through the years?
2. How have educators been doing during COVID-19?
3. What are the biggest challenges or barriers to getting your work done? Are students getting their work done? Considering those challenges, what advice would you give to Advisory for where to focus energy?

The Committee also collaborated with OSPI and American Institutes for Research (AIR) to review and edit questions for a series of listening sessions (3 family/community sessions, 1 educational staff session, 1 student session, 1 administrator session, and 1 Superintendent session).

On June 14, 2022, OSPI hosted a collaborative data interpretation workshop, which brought together 28 community partners to analyze the various data sources. Community partners represented multiple perspectives and roles including Local Education Agency (LEA) administrators and staff, school-based instructional staff, OSPI staff, community group members, and members of the Washington SEL Advisory Committee.

The SEL Advisory Committee and OSPI appreciate and value listening session participants for their honest and open discussions. Insights from the forum informed the Committee's recommendations and identified the SEL Professional Learning Network topics.

## **An Interdisciplinary Approach to SEL**

SEL requires an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to fully support students' social, emotional, and academic needs. Consistently building and reinforcing SEL skills across all aspects of students' lives, along with consistent messaging and implementation, strengthens those essential SEL skills.

During the 2022–23 school year, the SEL Program Supervisor, in partnership with the Committee and other agencies, strengthened the connection and coordination of SEL across many content areas and projects including, but not limited to:

- [Early Learning Resources | OSPI \(www.k12.wa.us\)](https://www.k12.wa.us/early-learning-resources)
- [Project Aware | OSPI \(www.k12.wa.us\)](https://www.k12.wa.us/project-aware)
- [Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(MTSS\) | OSPI \(www.k12.wa.us\)](https://www.k12.wa.us/multi-tiered-system-of-supports)
- [SEL Curriculum Grants | OSPI \(www.k12.wa.us\)](https://www.k12.wa.us/SEL-curriculum-grants)
- [Connecting The Arts to Social Emotional Learning | OSPI \(www.k12.wa.us\)](https://www.k12.wa.us/connecting-the-arts-to-social-emotional-learning)
- [Washington Animating Civic Action | Washington OER Hub](https://www.wa.gov/education/learning/washington-animating-civic-action)
- [Financial Education Public-Private Partnerships | OSPI \(www.k12.wa.us\)](https://www.k12.wa.us/financial-education-public-private-partnerships)

OSPI's SEL Program Supervisor continues to serve on multiple committees and has engaged with the following groups to collaborate on SEL efforts. These efforts are shared with the Committee where documents may be reviewed and edited, or topics identified for discussion or research. The content gotten from this collaborative approach may also inform legislative recommendations.

- [School Safety and Student Well-Being Advisory Committee](#): The purpose of the School Safety and Student Well-Being Advisory Committee (SS-SWAC) is to advise the Superintendent, OSPI's School Safety Center, Regional Safety Centers, school districts, and public and private schools on all matters related to comprehensive school safety and student well-being.

- [Tribal Leaders Congress on Education \(tlce.org\)](https://tlce.org): TLCE creates a collective voice of tribal leaders, citizens, and staff working in collaboration with WA State agencies, institutions, and organizations to advocate for legislative policy and research efforts that increase educational opportunities available for Native peoples that further the healing and enrichment of Indian Tribes and Nations.
- [State-Tribal Education Compact Schools \(STECs\) | OSPI \(www.k12.wa.us\)](https://www.k12.wa.us): STECs are schools with state-tribal education compacts and are exempt from all existing state statutes and rules regarding school districts and district boards of directors.
- School districts and Education Service Districts (ESDs): Specifically worked with staff focused on student engagement and SEL.
- [Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(MTSS\) | OSPI \(www.k12.wa.us\)](https://www.k12.wa.us): The MTSS Implementation Leadership Team worked on initiatives to implement a tiered system of supports that has SEL embedded within.
- The [Workforce Secondary Traumatic Stress | OSPI \(www.k12.wa.us\)](https://www.k12.wa.us): This legislation acknowledges the significant toll secondary traumatic stress (STS) has on educators, and subsequently students, and focuses on the adoption of policies and procedures so that districts and schools can take meaningful steps in supporting their staff's health and well-being.
- [The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Work Group \(CYBHWG\)](#): This workgroup provides recommendations to the Legislature to improve behavioral health services and strategies for children, youth, young adults, and their families. The group includes representatives from the Legislature, state agencies, health care providers, tribal governments, community health services, and other organizations, as well as parents/guardians of children and youth who have received services.

## Statewide Coordination and Partnerships

### EOGOAC Joint Committee Meeting

In addition to regular meetings, the Committee held a joint meeting with the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) on September 20, 2022. The EOGOAC and the Committee discussed SEL Assessments and recognized the need for building common definitions, understanding, and safeguards around student SEL skill assessment. There is confusion in districts about the difference between mental health screeners, student SEL skill assessments, and SEL evaluation. This confusion revolves around the purpose and varied need for each. From the participation in this joint meeting, a SEL Assessment subcommittee was formed with members from both Committees. The goal of the subcommittee is to co-design a brief or guidance on SEL assessment with students, families, and communities. This subcommittee met twice to begin planning this process.

*"Our students are able to co-regulate and problem solve. Focusing*

*on culture, they make meaning of SEL through the Indigenous lens  
and we are seeing fewer discipline issues and more engaged  
students in academics."  
—School district staff member*

## **Professional Educator Standards Board**

[Professional Educator Standards Board](#) (PESB) collaborates with OSPI and the Committee in various SEL topics and projects. PESB hosted a virtual interactive SEL series throughout the school year. This series focused on developing adult social emotional capacity. Research has shown that teachers who developed their own SEL skills improved their own well-being and the social, emotional, and academic development of their students.

Through this series, educators cultivated their identity as educators, as well as reaffirmed their purpose. The series helped strengthen the education community through self-awareness inquiry and lived experiences. This series was open to all educators, including Educational Staff Associates (ESAs), teachers, paraeducators, administrators, and classified staff.

## **Social Emotional Development Institutes and Mitigating the Effects of Intergenerational Trauma**

The OSPI SEL team and the OSPI Office of Native Education (ONE) collaborated on the Social Emotional Development (SED) Project to provide one- and two-day in-person SED Institutes held around the state that focused on:

- Learning about the impact of intergenerational trauma on Native students, families, and communities.
- Learning how WA State SEL Standards are nurtured with Indigenous social emotional teachings, experiences, and culturally responsive teaching strategies.
- Understanding how Indigenous cultural lifeways enhance social emotional development.
- Understanding and acknowledging how social emotional developmental impacts of current WA state educational initiatives and developments.
- Encouraging school districts to be open to learning about, understanding, and inviting Indigenous social emotional developmental practices into their school culture and educational experiences.
- Delivering training on how to form partnerships respectfully and properly with local Native community or Native Tribes to utilize Indigenous social emotional learning and activities within the school.

This training came about because ONE reported that the SEL standards, benchmarks, and resources were not resonating with Native communities. Providing this training allowed the SEL Washington Framework to be shared and discussed while aligning it to and highlighting cultural practices.

Districts who attended the training will continue to write cultural practices aligned to the SEL standards, benchmarks, and indicators.

## **SEL Professional Learning Network**

In January 2022, the SEL Professional Learning Network launched. This network was designed to provide Washington’s education professionals with SEL-related learning opportunities. The Committee was engaged throughout the development and had the opportunity to review and comment on needs assessment activities. This included a district survey and multiple community listening sessions with students, families, educators, community organizations, and superintendents. A collaborative interpretation process brought together 28 community organization representatives along with Committee members. This group reviewed the [Washington SEL Landscape Scan data](#), listening session responses, and survey results to identify the professional learning needs using five key findings. OSPI continued to update the Committee on the plans and progress of the Network as the design and implementation of professional learning activities unfolded.

The Network provided numerous professional learning opportunities, including webinars, peer-to-peer exchanges, collaborative learning series, coaching sessions, and SEL resources. Additionally, three districts have been identified as exemplary sites to highlight practitioner-friendly examples describing SEL capacity building from multiple perspectives (i.e., staff, families, and community partners). LEAs have engaged in continuous SEL-related events, strengthening the workforce, mindsets, and SEL Implementation efforts across the state.

## **State Leaders of Career Development Network**

The SEL Program Supervisor is a member of a multi-state team facilitated by the [Coalition for Career Development Center](#) that promotes career identity development, a sense of belonging, and individual pathways for students. This team discusses and researches the various levels of student engagement, from job shadows to company tours, internships, apprenticeships, career ladder opportunities, and the skills needed for success. Discussion of needed policies and policy changes is a prioritized topic for this team.

## **Collaborative States Initiative**

Washington is a member of the Collaborative States Initiative (CSI) led by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Partnering since 2016, the purpose is to work with states to help ensure that students are fully prepared—academically, socially, and emotionally—to succeed in school, at work, and in life (CASEL, 2021).

CASEL helps Washington by:

- Sharing research findings, information about best practices, resources, and tools such as guidance on how to integrate SEL into English Language Arts, mathematics, and social studies.
- Facilitating connections and sharing examples and resources across states.

- Providing technical assistance.
- Documenting how states, districts, and schools are implementing these policies and practices.

Washington State SEL work was highlighted in the national [Bright Spots](#) article in September 2022 and included in a brief in May 2023.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1: Build Statewide Infrastructure for Equitable Social Emotional Learning

### Recommendation 1A

Designate funding for SEL within basic education and require districts to implement an integrated system of support (ISS)/Multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework which includes:

- Engaging and partnering with families and communities in MTSS leadership/ implementation teams.
- Planning time for ISS/MTSS leadership team to prioritize equity to understand and support the needs of marginalized students.
- Providing substitutes for those educators on the ISS/MTSS leadership team to take part in planning.
- Providing professional development time to train staff in the ISS/MTSS process and understanding bias, both implicit and explicit.
- Collecting and analyzing data to make evidence-based decisions informed by authentic, disaggregated data.
- Providing SEL as a Tier 1 support (for all students at all grade levels), integrated and embedded into daily classroom lessons as a primary prevention practice (e.g., bullying, suicide, emotional distress, etc.).

### *Rationale 1A*

Washington’s students are best educated in places of equity, inclusion, safety, well-being, and learning, where they receive the academic, social, and emotional support they need. To achieve the goal of equitable educational opportunities and student outcomes, schools need to examine questions of power, privilege, and unconscious bias (Scheetz & Senge, 2016). Schools and districts need to implement a full continuum of student support that includes social emotional skills. There needs to be a statewide focus on prevention of bullying, suicide, emotional distress, etc.

Regional technical assistance is necessary to address the diversity of community needs statewide. MTSS, Inclusive Practices, mental health and well-being, and equity-based school practices are core foundational components for implementation. Systemic change needs include school leaders and family and community partnerships.

### Recommendation 1B

Direct OSPI to update the Washington School Improvement Framework (WSIF) to:

- Include a measure of school climate.

- Include the requirement for districts to create a leadership team inclusive of families and community-based organizations to identify systemic changes needed to support the most underserved and underrepresented students. To accomplish this, district leadership team must:
  - Champion, resource, integrate, and sustain equitable and inclusive initiatives.
  - Build nimble, responsive systems of support with transparent communication and shared decision making between schools, educators, and families.
  - Investigate policies and funding streams that support, incentivize, and/or require school-community partnership and engagement to meet student SEL needs.

## **Recommendation 1C**

Reinstate grant funding to districts for the purchase of evidence-based SEL Curriculum to include access to culturally sustaining equity-focused SEL implementation professional development.

*"Teachers are changing their practice to have an SEL block in the mornings to teach the lessons and have spoken highly of having access to this SEL curriculum."*

*—District staff member*

### *Rationale 1B and 1C*

Implementing SEL in a tiered system of support for all students and grades that is integrated and embedded into daily classroom lessons requires time, professional learning, and coaching. Policies and procedures need to be reviewed, revised, and developed to support student learning. Districts need to build staff capacity in their own SEL competencies, understanding and recognizing their own bias and engaging with students and families to ensure the SEL practices meet their students' needs.

This Committee commits to collaborating with OSPI and the EOGOAC to examine how a centralized Technical Assistance Center could better support schools and local education agencies with implementation of a tiered continuum of programs, practices, services, and supports that are equitable, inclusive, and promote student safety, wellness, and academics.

The Technical Assistance Center should work closely with ESDs and the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning under OSPI, as well as leverage the expertise that exists within OSPI and with community partners across the state.

## **Recommendation 1D**

Provide funding to PESB and the teacher preparation programs they serve to facilitate the development of SEL educator standards for pre-service and in-service educators.



## *Rationale 1D*

SEL increases students' academic success and sense of belonging and decreases emotional distress. SEL has also been shown to decrease teacher burnout. Students benefit from investing in teacher and educator leader preparation programs that allow teachers and administrators to enter the school and classroom with a foundation in SEL.

Because SEL educator standards have not been developed, student SEL standards are being used instead of pre-service and in-service educator standards. Student standards do not include principles and strategies of teaching the content as educator strategies do. They do not provide the required content, guidance, or support for educators on building their own adult social and emotional capacity or for educators to teach social emotional skills to students.

Supporting the development of SEL educator standards for pre-service and in-service training would provide a sustainable method for ensuring that all educators are equipped with the competencies needed to implement SEL instruction in all Washington state schools. This would reduce the need for districts to train new personnel annually.

## **2: Cross-Community and Cross-Agency Alignment**

### **Recommendation 2A**

To support the increased workload to champion the crucial SEL work identified by this Committee, funding is needed to:

- Develop materials for educators on how the SEL standards, benchmarks, and indicators are present in different cultures and how to engage students in a culturally responsive way.
- Develop and disseminate tools and guidance to school districts on effective partnerships with local tribes on social emotional learning implementation.
- Provide support to OSPI to serve as liaison to other agencies/groups doing SEL work (for example, the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) in their SEL work) and support increased technical assistance around specific laws, policies, guidance, implementation tools.
  - Gather and consolidate information/reports on one site.
  - Highlight interconnected recommendations from different groups/agencies.
- Review and create a repository for consolidated information, reports, and interconnected recommendations around SEL.

### **Recommendation 2B**

Amend current RCW 28A.200.477 to state that the Committee should advise OSPI, PESB, and other state agencies (for example, Health Care Authority, DCYF, etc.) in addition to advising the legislature through reports on SEL.

### *Rationale 2A and 2B*

Collaboration across agencies, including local education agencies, is needed to implement culturally responsive communication and community engagement plans for local education agencies, families, students, educators, and out-of-school providers that adhere to the principles of community co-design. Regular and ongoing two-way communication could be supported by a more formal structure that OSPI could develop or maintain through its SEL work.

Work needs to be designed for those on the margins, explicitly communities of color and American Indian and Alaska Native communities. There is a need to consolidate reports, data, and information from Native Education, Special Education Advisory Council, Pyramid model, early learning, student engagement work, EOGOAC, Road Map project, Disability Rights WA, Office of Education Ombuds, DCYF, Treehouse, TeamChild, higher education, Smart Center, etc.

### **Recommendation 2C**

Work with legislators to provide additional funding to provide up to \$200 per day to individuals with lived experience on specific topics and work participate on the Committee. These individuals may participate in the meetings virtually or in-person. They may join for one meeting or on an ongoing basis, provided that the individual does not receive compensation, including paid leave, from the individual's employer or contractor for participation in the meeting.

### **Recommendation 2D**

Provide additional funding for SEL Committee members who would otherwise be unable to participate (by paying for substitute teachers to offset time lost at work, etc.).

### *Rationale 2C and 2D*

As students, educators, and families continue to recover from the disruption of COVID-19, the Committee sees a need for additional tools to assist schools and communities in supporting the social emotional wellbeing of students. This includes providing greater access to the work of the Committee and further co-designing tools and resources with communities who are most marginalized in the education system.

## **3: Build Adult SEL Capacity**

### **Recommendation 3A**

Provide funding to OSPI to develop a needs assessment to identify school (building) educator SEL capacity; understanding of bias, equity, culturally sustaining, trauma-informed and universally designed practices; and SEL implementation process.

### *Rationale 3A*

Stress, trauma, and burnout impact the educator workforce across Washington. A survey by AdoptAClassroom.org found that 13% of teachers were considering leaving the profession before the 2022–2023 school year ends, which is higher than the historical average of 8% (Woodard,

2022). One of the top reasons given for considering this is burnout because of teacher shortages, which causes further shortages.

### **Recommendation 3B**

Provide funding to districts for school staff to be trained in the WA SEL framework and implementation strategies and practices during Professional Learning Community time.

#### *Rationale 3B*

All educators across the system need time to focus on building their own social and emotional capacity and their capacity to implement and advance SEL in classrooms and communities. SEL professional development and coaching must be anchored in culturally sustaining pedagogy, equity, and inclusion.

### **Recommendation 3C**

Provide funding to educator preparation programs (EPP) for EPP faculty to be trained in the WA SEL framework and implementation strategies. Current staff could receive training during Professional Learning Community time.

#### *Rationale 3C*

SEL for adults must include opportunities for learning and practice, as well as collaboration and modeling SEL strategies. SEL for students focuses on the individual's acquisition and application of skills and dispositions related to their own emotional world. For staff, their social emotional development must include the necessary skills to lead children in the same pursuits and to work as a team with other adults to support students.

### **Recommendation 3D**

Provide funding to schools to collaborate with community partners, as currently required by the legislature, to develop SEL resources. Connect and align their support efforts in support of the shared vision of learning and belonging across all partners.

#### *Rationale 3D*

Research shows that teachers who were required to teach SEL but were not given the resources to cultivate their own practice worsened their students' SEL skills (Reyes et al., 2012). Teachers who developed their own SEL competency not only improved their own well-being, but also improved the social, emotional, and academic development of their students (Flook et al., 2013).

### **Recommendation 3E**

Make grant funding to districts available to ensure that before- and after-school providers, community organizations, and families are included in SEL learning opportunities.

#### *Rationale 3E*

Research suggests that teachers' own SEL competencies influence the quality of student-teacher relationships, classroom management, and overall school climate (Jones et al., 2021). Adults who recognize, understand, label, and regulate their own emotions are less likely to report burnout;

demonstrate higher levels of patience and empathy; encourage healthy communication; and create safe student learning environments (Berman et al., 2018).

## **4: Develop Family and Community Partnerships for Creating Safe and Supportive Learning Environments through SEL**

### **Recommendation 4A**

Provide additional dedicated funding for collaboration with the Committee, OSPI, and the EOGOAC to:

- Explore adding state-level accountability measures to address authentic family, student, and community engagement (including investigating policies and funding streams that support, incentivize, and/or require school-community partnership and engagement to meet student SEL needs). The accountability measures should be focused on the most underserved students with persistent opportunity gaps. Accountability measures should not be punitive but instead drive engagement, technical assistance, coaching, and support.
- Provide family and community engagement in collaboration with tribal partners.
- Work with the new WA Family Engagement TA Center on a toolkit for LEAs to use for family/community engagement on SEL.

### *Rationale 4A*

A safe and supportive learning environment requires SEL implementation that recognizes the individual and cultural strengths of every student, family, and intergenerational relationship. Families are the experts on their children, students are the experts on their lived experiences, and community partners hold deep relationships with families and students. Schools and districts must prioritize meaningful family and community engagement, especially with families who are most marginalized and impacted by inequities in the education system.

Discipline, attendance, restraint, and isolation policies and practices continue to disproportionately harm students of color, students in foster care, students experiencing homelessness, and students with disabilities. There should be an examination of the education system to eliminate policies that harm and exclude students and negatively impact relational safety.

## **5: Develop Safe-Guards Around Assessing SEL**

### **Recommendation 5A**

Require Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) to create a model policy for education professionals using observational SEL assessments to receive professional development and coaching on anti-bias, culturally responsive practices, and trauma-informed practices.

## **Recommendation 5B**

Direct OSPI (including SEL Team and ONE) to work with the Committee and the EOGOAC to develop a research brief on SEL Assessment which includes research on equity, bias, delivery, and climate. This project will include community voices to guide the direction of the Washington SEL assessments brief.

### *Rationale 5A and 5B*

The SEL assessment field is rapidly growing, and few assessments are being thoroughly reviewed for validity and reliability (Taylor et al., 2018). SEL assessment is occurring in Washington without proper system preparation. Schools do not typically measure school climate or prioritize time for systematic review and discussion of data related to SEL or school culture. In addition, the results of an assessment that is not culturally responsive may fail to capture strengths and perspectives of students from all cultures.

It is also important for schools and districts to guard against the presence of unconscious or implicit bias in assessment, especially when using teacher or adult rating of students. Unconsciously held differences in expectations of students of differing races can lead to subsequent inaccuracies in teachers' evaluation of students' abilities or performance, as well as unintended differences in how instruction is delivered. Research shows that these differences can ultimately contribute to disparities in student learning and achievement (Warikoo et al., 2016).

Additionally, educational staff are usually not trained to know how SEL assessment results map onto instructional practice. A nationally representative survey of more than 800 school principals revealed that while there was great support for SEL (95%), there was far more uncertainty about how to assess student's SEL competencies. Only 17% reported they were aware of which assessments of students' SEL competencies were available to use, and only 16% believed their teachers knew how to use data from these measures (DePaoli et al., 2017).

The following conditions to support SEL are included in the Washington SEL framework for implementation:

- Creating a positive school climate and culture.
- Linking SEL to existing school policies and practices.
- Selecting and implementing evidence based SEL practices.
- Using data for continuous improvement sets up the success for SEL implementation.

Schools must deliver SEL to benefit all students while promoting safe and inclusive learning environments; supporting educators to examine and challenge biases in their teaching practice; and working towards respect, equality, and justice (Jones et al., 2021, p. 8).

# CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships and establishes learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships along with rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction.

For future work, the Committee will:

1. Begin planning, in collaboration with OSPI and the EOGOAC, a centralized Technical Assistance Center to help ensure schools and districts implementation of a full continuum of student supports, inclusive of social emotional skills building as a support for all students. Expanding the Technical Assistance system in Washington to include a centralized Technical Assistance Center focused on MTSS, Inclusive Practices, Mental Health and Wellbeing efforts, and Equity Based School Practices will lead to:
  - Clear alignment around the purpose and goals of equity, access, and inclusion work in schools.
  - Increased connection and coordination across projects.
  - Equitable access to no-fee technical assistance and coaching.
  - Increased buy-in from educators, administrators, and communities.
  - Eliminating confusion and redundancy.
2. Provide additional coordination and engagement across educational partners and agencies to support SEL implementation.
3. Collaborate with OSPI and the EOGOAC to develop a list of valid and reliable SEL implementation measurement tools.
4. Consider and plan how to incorporate student and family voices into the Committee.
5. Work on an alignment of SEL and Cultural Competency, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CCDEI) standards for educators and educator prep programs.
6. Build a shared understanding of SEL and how it connects to academics.

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- Members and staff of the Education Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee
- Joan Banker, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Lee Collyer, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Ruth Cross, Collaborative for Academic Social Emotional Learning
- Megan Gildin, American Institute for Research
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- Debra Parker, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Committee Membership

*RCW 28A.300.477 set minimum Committee membership.*

Laura Allen	Washington Association of School Administrators
Tammy Bolen	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Xyzlora Brownell	Department of Children, Youth and Families
Sarah Butcher**	SEL for Washington
Jen Chong Jewell	Governor's Office of Education Ombuds
Laurie Dils	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Mary Fertakis	Washington State Board of Education
Laree Foster	Washington Association of School Psychologists
Brian Freeman	Rural Alliance
Danielle Harvey	School Nurses Association of Washington
Fahren Johnson	School's Out Washington
Bill Kallappa	Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee
Kasey Kates	Healthcare Authority – Behavioral Health and Recovery
Josh Lane	School Counselor, Central Kitsap School District
Bonnie McDaniel	Washington State Parent Teacher Association
Mick Miller	Washington Association of Educational Service Districts
Susan Mosby	Washington Education Association
Caryn Park**	Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs
Monika Schuller	SEL Educator, White Salmon Valley School District
Terique Scott	Commission of African American Affairs
Katherine Seibel	Committee for Children
Leiani Sherwin	Professional Educator Standards Board
Maria Siguenza	Commission of Hispanic Affairs
RayAnn Silva	University of Washington – SMART
Michelle Sorenson	Washington Association of School Social Workers
Debbie Tully	Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
Angel Williams	Tribal Representation – West

\*\* The elected Committee Co-Chairs

## Appendix B

### Governance and Structure

The Committee adopted operating protocols in the form of a Charter. The Charter outlines the policies and procedures of the Committee related to membership, decision making protocols, meeting conduct, and communications. The Charter may be found on the [OSPI SEL webpage](#).

### Committee Meetings

The Committee met monthly during 2022–23. Meeting agendas and notes may be found on the OSPI SEL webpage. The Committee meetings are open to the public to attend and public comment time is allotted. To gather more public comment, a public comment form was added to the [OSPI SEL webpage](#) for anyone to access and submit at any time.

Five subcommittees work on the specific tasks identified in the legislation or prioritized need. Members may volunteer to serve on any of the following subcommittees which meet via Zoom monthly or as needed to complete their specific tasks:

- SEL and Equity
- Education Preparation Programs
- K–12 Standards Alignment
- SEL Specialty Endorsement
- SEL Assessment

### Process for Recommendations

As work was being done to accomplish the tasks presented in RCW 28A.300.477, the Committee discussed potential recommendations based on systemic barriers, needed policy changes, or needed policy development. Discussion to identify the recommendations took place in whole committee discussions that were open to the public and open for public comment. The SEL and Equity subcommittee met to review drafted recommendations and do an equity review. The Committee reviewed and edited the draft recommendations. The [Puget Sound Education Service District \(PSESD\) Racial Equity tool](#) was used to incorporate racial equity analysis into the recommendations and decision-making process (Puget Sound Educational Service District, n.d.).

## Appendix C

### SEL and Equity Subcommittee

The SEL and Equity subcommittee invites all members to participate in every meeting. The SEL and Equity subcommittee meets as needed for specific work that is determined during the Committee meetings, such as reviewing the recommendations utilizing the adopted equity tool. The subcommittee discusses content for the whole group Committee meetings and drafts documents that are then taken back to the Committee to discuss, edit, and finalize. This subcommittee also

met to review equity training plans with Education Northwest, which provided training to the entire Committee to ensure a common understanding, common language, and that equitable practices are infused into all the work the Committee does.

## **Education Preparation Programs Subcommittee**

The Educator Preparation Program (EPP) Social Emotional Learning (SEL) subcommittee recruited a cohort of 14 EPP representatives from Washington state to learn alongside them through participation in the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child's year-long Educator Institute. Through the institute, Washington Teacher and Principal educators are learning strategies to teach, support and assess their candidates in using social emotional learning as a cultural lens through which students are supported. Programs are learning to embed social emotional learning systemically, rather than as an "add-on" to their programs. The subcommittee also held quarterly debrief meetings for this Washington cohort to help them better understand and connect the learnings to the Washington state SEL standards and to their own work. Participants are developing action plans to incorporate this learning into their work. After the Educator Institute ends in May 2023, the subcommittee plans to continue meeting with this cohort, and all interested EPP representatives across the state, to support them in continuing their progress in embedding social emotional learning into their programs. This subcommittee will also create a presentation for K–12 educational staff on the learnings that are applicable to current educators.

## **K–12 Standards Alignment Subcommittee**

The standards alignment and cross-walking work of Health and Physical Education standards with Social Emotional Learning standards were completed this year. OSPI staff, with support from this K–12 Standards Alignment Subcommittee, drafted alignment documents last year and contracted with a classroom educator this year to review and edit the documents. Documents were finalized and will be posted on OSPI's website.

Additionally, OSPI and subcommittee members are currently working with a nationally recognized contractor with experience and expertise in SEL content integration. This work entails developing resources (available in fall 2023) for educators to support SEL integration into five content areas:

- Health
- The Arts
- Social Studies
- World Languages
- Physical Education

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