

***Washington State  
Social Emotional Learning  
Implementation Guide***



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

# USING THIS IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

This Implementation Guide is designed to be used with other documents that make up Washington's SEL Resource Package and by anyone who works with children and youth and is concerned with their social emotional well-being. It includes perspectives for school leaders, educators, youth serving organizations, and parents/families and provides overarching concepts that are centered around the principles that are foundational for the development of *SEL in Washington State: Equity, Cultural Responsiveness, Universal Design and Trauma-Informed Practices*.

This Guide aligns with other SEL resources in Washington State such as the Washington SEL Standards/Benchmarks/Indicators, SEL Briefs, and the SEL Module, which are all part of Washington State's SEL Resource Package and are intended to be a collective of tools that are mutually supportive toward SEL implementation.

This Guide is designed to be used systemically where schools, communities, and families work together to understand and grow their respective roles in bolstering their students' SEL development in a mutually supportive manner.

The developers of this Guide recommend that anyone planning to implement SEL read the Guide in its entirety before beginning implementation. Prior reading can be beneficial to those individuals facilitating conversations with collaborators as they plan and coordinate efforts to set the stage for a successful and sustained application.



# INTRODUCTION

Social emotional learning (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. Educators, families, business leaders, students, and administrators in Washington State and nationally agree that SEL is essential for students to succeed in school, careers, and life, and should be part of teaching and learning in schools. Many schools and communities need guidance about how to effectively implement SEL practices across the whole day.

This Washington SEL Indicators (SELI) Workgroup created this Implementation Guide as part of their collective of products and resources grounded by a set of guiding principles for education (equity, cultural responsiveness, universal design, and trauma-informed practices) and serving as the foundation of social emotional teaching and learning specific to Washington State. SELI Workgroup members agreed that all adults engaged in SEL implementation need to build the necessary awareness, attitudes, and skills to support and teach SEL. Then, they will be better informed and more effective in fostering learning for every student that includes an intentional focus on individual student's social emotional development. Washington State has an opportunity now to commit to implementing SEL in a truly collaborative fashion—bringing together educators, families, school counselors, youth development workers, district administrators, youth, and the many others who impact students' social emotional learning—by implementing plans that are responsive to and embedded in the cultures and communities present. Washington State's SEL Module has a segment devoted to "What is SEL" and provides an overview of the important elements of SEL in meeting the needs of all students.

## **SEL Is Happening in Pockets Across Washington State, but More Guidance and Support Are Needed**

A statewide landscape scan of SEL in K–12 education identified a need for a common language and framework for SEL implementation and for guidance on how to integrate SEL with academics and other school initiatives related to equity, climate, MTSS, and trauma-informed practices (Petrokubi, Bates, & Denton, 2019).

A statewide survey of districts conducted as part of this scan revealed a need for the following:

1. Funding for SEL resources
2. Additional time and support for adult skill and knowledge development, including understanding of child and adolescent development
3. Simple, high-impact strategies to integrate SEL into all aspects of districts' work and build specific SEL skills
4. Family and community partnerships
5. Strategies for promoting inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments



Stakeholder engagement sessions with families, educators, community-based organizations, and Tribal representatives across the state (See Stakeholder Feedback and Community Outreach Summary) and in an online survey conducted by OSPI revealed that SEL should be connected to and adapted to the community. By collaborating closely with students, families, community-based organizations, and tribes; schools can design, plan, and implement SEL approaches that fit the local culture and context.

## **SEL Is a Shared Responsibility**

School is a social place where diverse individuals come together to learn how to learn together. They communicate their thoughts and values, get along with others, navigate differences, and resolve conflicts. What happens before and after school can be as important as what happens during the school day. Young people develop and practice SEL every day in their families, schools, and communities. The school's role in supporting students' social emotional development is an enhancement, not a substitute, for the learning and development of those skills that take place at home and in the community; it is a necessary complement to that learning. It takes schools, families, and community partners, such as expanded learning opportunity (ELO) programs, to build full-day learning environments and approaches to SEL instruction that support children and youth in building SEL competencies. The more that families, schools, and communities collaborate, the more support young people experience for their social emotional development. As demonstrated in Figure 1, everyone has a shared role and a shared responsibility.

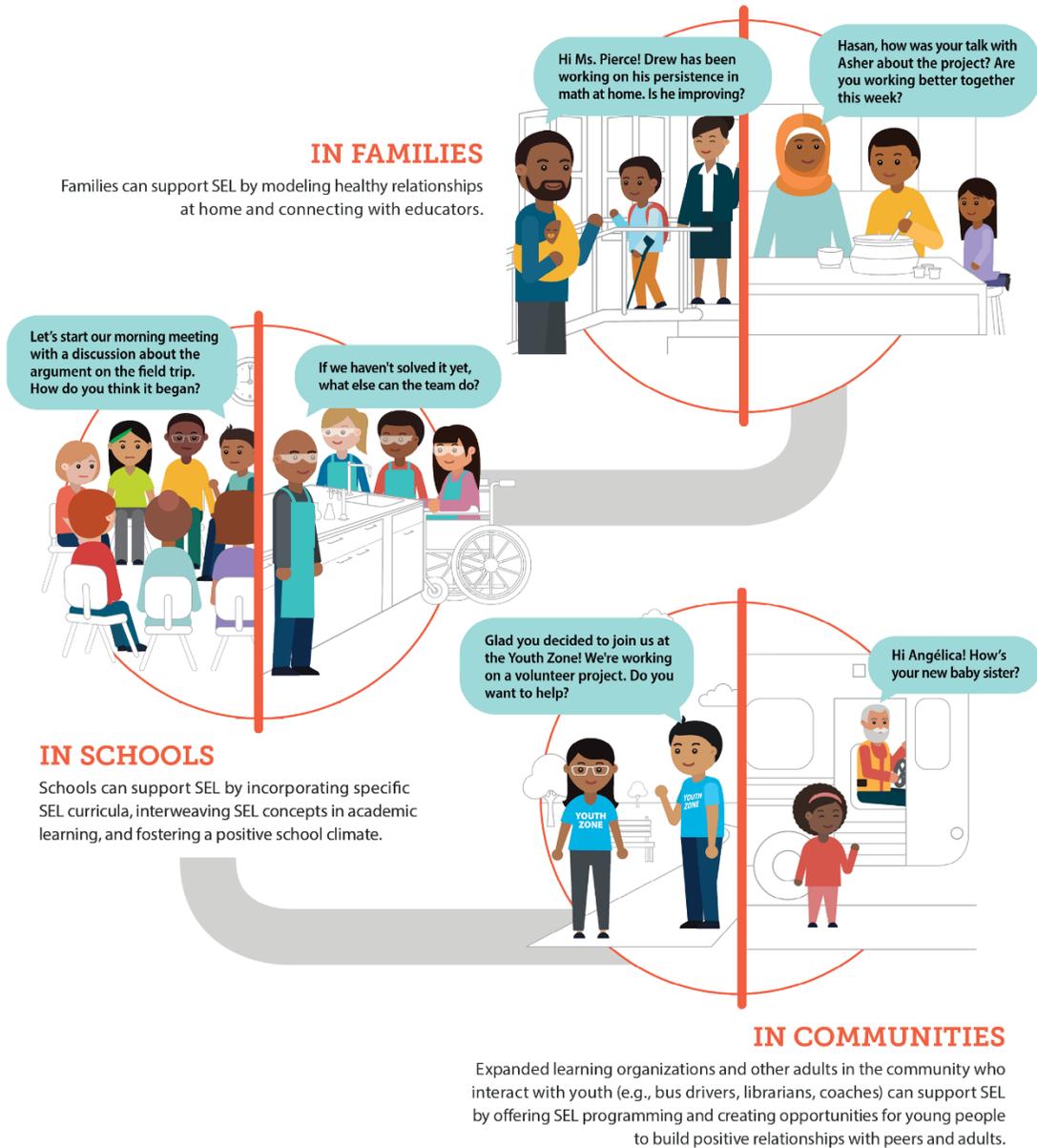
For more information about how schools, families, and communities can support SEL implementation, see the following briefs that have been developed by the SELI Workgroup as part of Washington State's SEL Resource Package:

- Education Leaders
- Educators
- Parents and Families
- Community and Youth Development Organizations
- Culturally Responsive Practices



Figure 1. Social Emotional Learning is a Shared Responsibility

# Social Emotional Learning is a shared responsibility



This figure was prepared under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0009 by Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest, administered by Education Northwest, based on the work of the Washington Social Emotional Learning Indicators Workgroup.



## What is Washington’s SEL Implementation Guide?

The SELI Workgroup developed the Washington SEL Implementation Guide to provide a comprehensive and school/community-specific plan to improve SEL outcomes for all the children and youth they serve. Different localities will implement evidence-based, equity-focused SEL in ways that meet the specific needs of their own students. However, without attention to each of the components addressed in this Implementation Guide, districts and schools cannot reasonably expect to meet the needs of all students.

The SELI Workgroup interacted with and learned from many stakeholders: families, students, community professionals, youth development professionals, teachers, principals, school board members, school counselors, social workers, psychologists, superintendents, and others. The Workgroup used this feedback to inform their development of an SEL Resource Package with a framework consisting of three essential elements and four guiding principles. The Workgroup determined that the essential elements are the key implementation practices that, when grounded in the guiding principles, lead to successful SEL implementation and sustainability. They also determined that the guiding principles form the foundation that grounds the SEL work and connects and aligns it with other educational efforts.

The following three essential elements are critical to ensuring that SEL efforts in schools stay true to Washington State’s commitment to every child:

1. We must create the conditions to support student SEL – maintain a positive school climate and culture and infuse SEL into school policies and practices inside and outside of the classroom.
2. We must do this work in collaboration – with the full school community involved from the outset of planning, through implementation and review. That includes families, students, youth-serving organizations, educators, and professionals who play critical roles in the life of a school (e.g., school counselors, social workers, and psychologists).
3. We must build adult capacity – readiness to engage our own social emotional skills to support and relate with all students, to identify and counter bias, and to create learning environments in which students feels safe enough to stretch their learning.

This work must be firmly grounded in the four guiding principles of equity, cultural responsiveness, universal design, and trauma-informed practices. Figure 2 describes the essential elements and guiding principles that make up the framework. “The goal of Washington’s public education system is to prepare every student who walks through our school doors for post-secondary aspirations, careers, and life. To do so, we must embrace an approach to education that encompasses the whole child” (Reykdal, 2017, p. 1). To meet this goal, we must support and challenge each other to consistently revisit the guiding principles at each stage: planning; implementation, review, revision; and sustainability.



Figure 2. Framework for the Washington SEL Implementation Guide



## Framework for the Washington Social Emotional Learning Implementation Guide

The framework commits to four guiding principles:

- **Equity.** Each child receives what he or she needs to develop to his or her full academic and social potential.
- **Cultural Responsiveness.** Draws upon students' unique strengths and experiences while orienting learning in relation to individuals' cultural context.
- **Universal Design.** Provides a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people by removing barriers in the curriculum.
- **Trauma-Informed Practices.** Recognizes the unique strengths and challenges of children and youth in light of the adversities they face.

The framework has the following three essential elements:

- **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.
- **Collaborate with families, communities, and ELO providers** in the design, implementation, and review of local plans to integrate SEL in schools and communities.
- **Build adult capacity** in terms of awareness, attitudes, and skills that support SEL for all students by creating a leadership team, developing a vision statement, conducting a needs and readiness assessment, creating an implementation plan, and creating a professional learning system.

Each element of the framework for the Washington SEL Implementation Guide connects to the others. Collaboration between families, schools, and communities will build programs, policies, and practices that are responsive to the diverse cultures of each school community. To support capacity building, schools must successfully integrate trauma-informed approaches and universal design into SEL instructional practices or strategies. Engaging diverse perspectives in the design, implementation, and review of SEL efforts can help identify signs of, and solutions to, inequitable practices or outcomes.



## A Community-Wide Vision for SEL

A community-wide vision for SEL that is connected and adapted to the community is essential. As illustrated in Figure 3, schools create the conditions to support students' SEL, collaborate with families and communities, and build adult capacity to create engaging and inclusive learning environments with positive youth–adult relationships that support SEL, academic progress, and positive life outcomes for students. To develop the framework for the Implementation Guide, the SELI Workgroup conducted community outreach sessions and gathered input from diverse stakeholders. The process drew on the principles of codesign, facilitated conversation, feedback on draft documents, public comment, and surveys. See the Stakeholder Feedback and Community Outreach Summary for stakeholder feedback, the community outreach process, and a copy of the interview protocol.

The Washington SEL Implementation Guide:

- Supports local community needs and assets
- Is shaped by a commitment to equity, cultural responsiveness, universal design, and trauma-informed practices
- Approaches the social emotional development of children as a shared responsibility among families, educators, youth development professionals, and other youth- and family-serving agencies and organizations

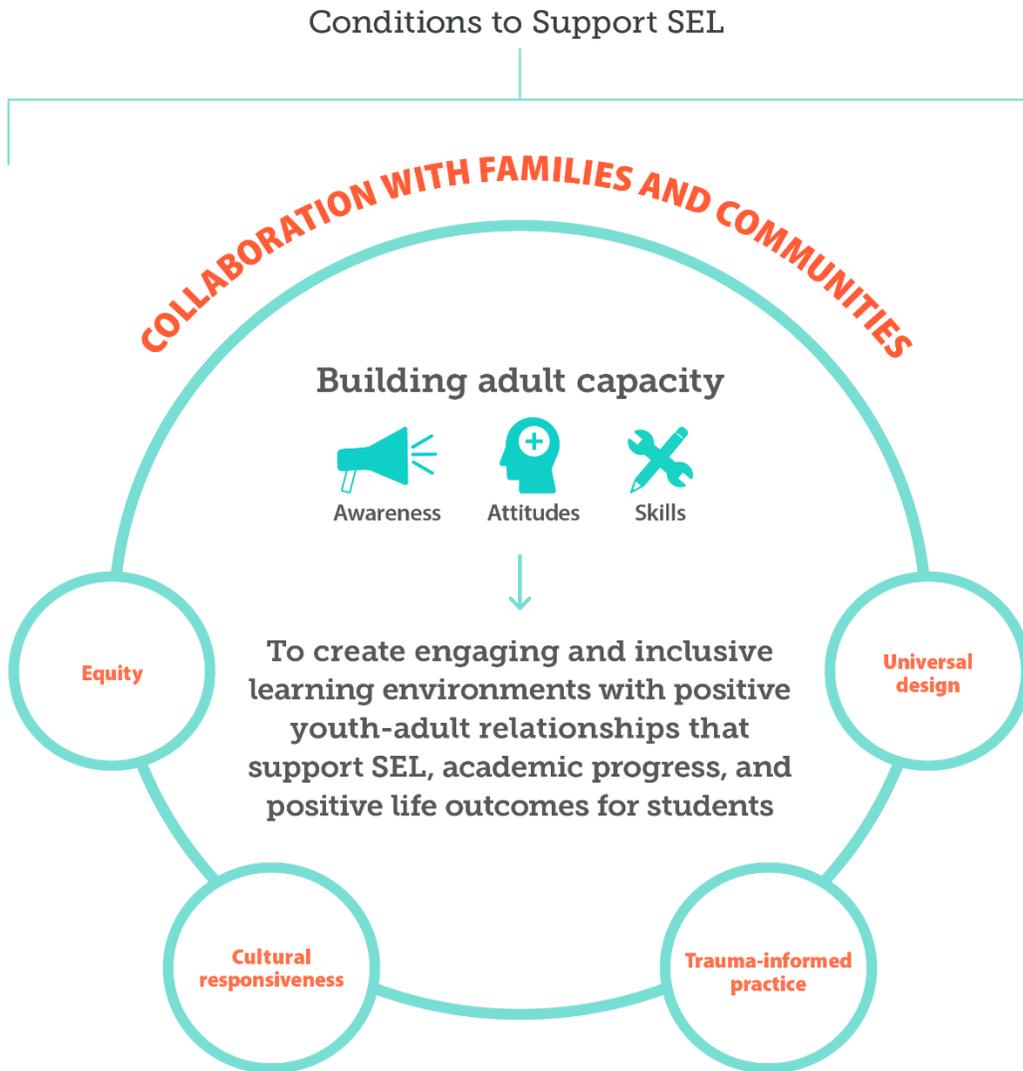
## Stakeholder Feedback Takeaway

Families participating in feedback sessions were supportive of SEL in schools but did not want to see their diverse cultural experiences and values negated by implementation of standards that do not value diversity. Families want the opportunity to understand in advance what the school aims to teach their children; this lets them explore the ideas along with the students.



Figure 3. A Community-Wide Vision for Social Emotional Learning

# A communitywide vision for Social Emotional Learning



*This figure was prepared under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0009 by Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest, administered by Education Northwest, based on the work of the Washington Social Emotional Learning Indicators Workgroup.*



## Implementation Resources

The Washington SELI Workgroup developed implementation resources to support education stakeholders as they implement SEL in schools. Figure 4 describes the implementation resources.

**Figure 4. Washington State’s SEL Indicators Implementation Plan Resources**

Washington SEL Resource	Description	Use
<b>Washington State SEL Implementation Guide</b>	Statewide implementation guide for schools with three focus areas: creating the conditions to support SEL, capacity building, and engagement of local communities in a collaborative process. This guide helps Washington State’s schools develop a comprehensive and school/community-specific plan to improve SEL outcomes for all of the students they serve.	Help educators, administrators, staff, parents and families and community members understand the need to develop a coherent SEL plan to implement at the school level. (see SEL briefs included in this resource package)
<b>Standards, Benchmarks, and Indicators (SBI)</b>	A scaffolded tool to help answer the question, “What are the ‘look fors’ when assessing a student’s social emotional learning competence?”	Help educators plan opportunities for students to learn, practice, and demonstrate understanding of their emotions and behaviors. (see SEL Standards Benchmarks and Indicators)
<b><u>SEL Module</u></b>	The online module is composed of five segments that support systemic SEL within schools and communities and provide a structure as educators implement the SBI.	Help educators, administrators, school staff, other professionals, parents and families who interact with youth to build their understanding of SEL.

The Washington State SELI has been careful to ensure that the Washington State Standards, Benchmarks, and Indicators (SBI) and the Washington SEL Implementation Guide take the following essential considerations into account as part of the design:

- Washington State’s student body is increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse.
- SEL is not a uniform system of experiences or values. Any SEL implementation must be careful not to standardize a dominant culture’s set of values as universal.
- Bias, historical oppression, exposure to trauma, and inequitable access to resources influence students’ social emotional skill development and adults’ perceptions of students’ skills.



## Why Is Social Emotional Learning Important?

SEL competencies are necessary for success in academic learning and are associated with increased academic achievement, higher income, better health, and social engagement (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Farrington et al., 2012; Greenberg, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Durlak, 2017; Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017). Students who have positive teacher relationships and a sense of belonging engage more consistently in learning, attend school more regularly, and achieve at higher levels. SEL benefits all students. All students benefit from being in developmentally rich and safe environments and having supportive adults who care about them and take interest in their lives. But SEL especially benefits students who face additional stress due to trauma and adversity and lack of access to quality housing, food, health care, and safety (The National Commission of Social, Emotional, & Academic Development). SEL also provides an important and necessary foundation for approaches to discipline that are student centered and restorative in nature (Osher et al., 2008; Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010).

## Washington State’s Proposed SEL Standards

Self-Awareness  
Self-Management  
Self-Efficacy

Social Awareness  
Social Management  
Social Engagement

## SEL Is a Whole-School Effort

Providing high-quality learning opportunities for SEL involves more than just choosing a curriculum or adding circle time into a classroom routine. Although SEL implementation can start with these types of practices, to achieve the best outcomes for students, SEL should be intentionally integrated throughout the day. Schools need to build a positive school climate and culture, explicitly teach social emotional skills, infuse SEL into academic instruction, partner with families and communities, and teach all adults practices that can be used to promote SEL (Jones & Kahn, 2017; Oberle, Domitrovich, Meyers, & Weissberg, 2016; Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015). SEL is most effective when it promotes cultural responsiveness, equity, and youth voice. Ensuring student voice can ensure that SEL efforts do not overlook student needs and insights.

## Why Does SEL Matter for Washington’s Students?

Our public schools are doing well by many measures, but our state’s promise is to provide ample support for the basic education of *all* children however, we see the results in data and in individual stories of students who do not make it to graduation. Further, we know that we need to prepare *all* students to be college and career ready. Often, employers say that the candidates who come to them do not have the necessary social emotional skills to be successful in the workforce.



## Intentional SEL Implementation Can Be an Opportunity to Advance Equity

Our state constitution promises a basic education to all children. Although our public schools provide positive learning opportunities for many students, we cannot ignore the fact that we continue to produce poor outcomes for disproportionate numbers of particular groups of students. Racial and ethnic disparities compound for students with disabilities, who also, as a group, face disproportionate discipline, higher rates of chronic absenteeism, and lower graduation rates (Losen & Gillespie, 2012).

SEL can support a transformative approach to education through building skills and competencies—founded on strong, respectful relationships, and focused on the appreciation of similarities and differences—to develop collaborative solutions for community and social problems (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Borowski, 2018).

If we rush to implement SEL without simultaneously addressing issues related to equity and inclusion, we run the risk of reinforcing inequities in our schools and in our communities. By developing SEL plans starting with equity in mind, Washington State can fulfill on its promise to help **all** students do better in school and lead more successful and fulfilling lives. The Washington SEL Implementation Guide allows for continuous adaptation at the individual, school, and district levels to ensure SEL is equitable for students of all cultures, languages, histories, identities, and abilities.

## How Can We Implement SEL in Our School and Community?

Every district, school, and community across Washington State is unique, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to implementing schoolwide and community-wide SEL (see report: K–12 Social and Emotional Learning Across Washington). However, research on SEL implementation points to some best practices to promote consistent and powerful outcomes for schools and youth-serving organizations. Action steps and additional resources are provided in the Essential Elements section of this guide. Using these elements as an outline to support schools and communities in implementing SEL will ensure that they are using best practices from a strong evidence base.

The Washington SELI Workgroup developed this guide specifically for Washington State schools and communities. They identified guiding principles to support an integrated approach to SEL and reflect leading research in the field. They also created SEL Implementation Guide: Additional Resources (page 61) with other high-quality SEL implementation guides and supports that are recommended to be used as additional resources during SEL implementation processes (see *SEL Annotated Bibliographies Implementation Guide: Resource List*).



## Where to Start? School and Community Readiness to Implement

Each school, district, and community has unique needs, resources, and readiness to implement SEL. In a recent survey about SEL administered to Washington State district staff members, 91 percent of responding districts reported that SEL is reflected in their mission, goals, or strategic plans, and 93 percent of districts reported having at least one school working to address SEL (Petrokubi, Bates, & Denton, 2019). Only 14 percent of the 168 districts that responded reported having adopted SEL-specific policies or procedures.

School administrators who have implemented SEL see considerable benefit in preparing their staff for that journey. Implementing SEL is often met with mixed reactions. Many staff have intense workloads, and SEL is often seen as “one more thing” for them to take on, rather than a strategy that will ultimately benefit both their students and themselves. In an SEL-influenced environment, students learn to manage their own behavior and to regulate their emotions, leading to better-managed classrooms and fewer disciplinary issues. However, some staff might experience a level of emotional vulnerability when they embark on teaching SEL to their students. School leaders can help their school realize the potential benefits of an SEL-influenced learning environment and alleviate feelings of vulnerability by providing professional development on SEL for adults. Some schools that have not yet implemented SEL have spent up to a year before regular professional development just to plan, acclimate, and prepare for school implementation. It can be equally useful to include key community members and families in the development.

No matter where a school is in its process of SEL implementation, we hope that this guide and embedded resources can help serve the school and community in improving social emotional and academic outcomes for youth.

## Research and Evidence Base

In past years, SEL was sometimes treated as “just one more thing” to add to educators’ already busy days and significant responsibilities. Research shows that implementing purposeful, evidence-based SEL programs and practices improves students’ academic outcomes, attitudes, and social emotional skills; improves students’ and educators’ sense of well-being and safety; and reduces disciplinary incidents, emotional distress, and drug use (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017).

Research shows that we should expect to see the following benefits from successful SEL implementation:

- **Increased social emotional competencies** in adults and children, which are essential for navigating diverse communities (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018)
- More **positive relationships** between and among children and adults, and between and among the various adults who support children (Berg, Nolan, Yoder, Osher, & Mart, 2019; Jones, Brush, et al., 2017)



- More **positive environments** that support children’s learning, in and out of school (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Durlak & Weissberg, 2013; Jones, Brush, et al., 2017)
- As these positive relationships and social emotional competencies increase, we expect to see results in various indicators of school health and student success, including:
- An increase in regular student attendance and academic achievement (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017)
- A decrease in overall behavior referrals in schools (Sklad, Diekstra, De Ritter, Ben, & Gravesteyn, 2012)
- An increase in student resilience (Cantor, Osher, Berg, Steyer, & Rose, 2018; Thompson, 2014)
- An increase in teacher/educator well-being and job satisfaction (Greenberg, Brown & Abenavoli, 2016)
- An increase in family, school, and community connections and collaboration (Garbacz, Swanger-Gagné, & Sheridan, 2015; Osher, Moroney, & Williamson, 2018)
- Improved public health (Greenberg, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Durlak, 2017; Jones et al., 2015; Jones et al., 2017)
- An increase in the number of students attaining a high school diploma, a college degree, and a full-time job (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015)
- A workforce that meets the needs of employers (National Network of Business and Industry Associations, 2014; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2016)



# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Washington State has the opportunity to take a leading role in developing an intentional approach to SEL that engages the full school community (families, educators, students, youth-serving agencies, and community members) and is grounded in the principles of equity, cultural responsiveness, universal design, and trauma-informed practices. These principles were outlined in the first report from the Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks (SELB) Workgroup, [Addressing Social Emotional Learning in Washington’s K–12 Public Schools](#), and are further refined in the current Washington SEL Implementation Guide based on new research on SEL.

## Equity

According to the National Equity Project, “educational equity means that each child receives what he or she needs to develop to his or her full academic and social potential” (National Equity Project, 2019). This guide focuses specifically on issues of education equity as they relate to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and economic status.

Equity does not happen by accident. It requires deliberate and continuous effort to understand the likelihood and actual impacts of programs, policies, and practices. It takes courage to face up to inequitable outcomes and work to change when we have invested energy and resources into developing processes or practices thought to be effective. The need for a purposeful and reflective approach holds true for SEL implementation.

Research demonstrates that SEL can help reduce opportunity gaps with its focus on positive, respectful relationships between students and educators as a foundation for learning. Equity will not magically follow implementation of SEL programs without intentional and explicit effort to plan, monitor, and revise for equitable outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Planning for equity includes deciding how “success” of SEL efforts will be measured and what outcomes will be tracked and why. Moving forward with implementation of SEL practices and strategies without attending to issues of equity risks exacerbating existing inequities rather than reducing them.

Schools must move beyond planning and set concrete action steps for improvement. Each school community will need to build inclusive working groups that will be able to look at current policies and practices and carefully assess the likely impacts of proposed SEL approaches for equity. Racism in schools limits the beneficial effects of SEL through threats to students’ identity development, stereotype threat, micro-aggressions, and reduced student access to high-quality supports (Petrokubi, Bates, & Malinis, 2019). Approaching SEL with a commitment to equity “requires addressing barriers at the systemic (poverty) institutional (exclusionary discipline) and individual (implicit bias and burnout of staff) levels. This includes efforts to recruit and retain a

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<sup>1</sup> According to Marsh et al. (2018, p. 8), research “suggests that SEL support could foster greater equity for traditionally underserved groups ... research has also provided evidence of disparities in SEL support for African American and Latinx students in comparison to their White peers. Scholars have observed gaps by race/ethnicity in both perceptions of school culture/climate and in reported social emotional learning, echoing extensive literature on racial inequities in educational resources (e.g., Baker, Green, 2005; Hough et al., 2017) and in academic outcomes (e.g., CEPA, n.d.)”



more diverse workforce that reflects the student population, equity policies, professional development for educators, anti-bias trainings for educators, and school-family-community partnership” (Petrokubi, Bates & Malinis, 2019, p. 6; see also Simmons, Brackett, & Adler, 2018).

### *Considerations for Implementation*

To implement an equity-focused SEL effort, consider the following questions:

- To what extent have you considered the historical, socio-political, and racialized context of education in the United States when developing your SEL implementation plans?
- To what extent is creating equitable and accessible learning environments and outcomes an explicit part of your SEL work?
- What opportunities do you have for adults to develop their own self-awareness, social emotional intelligence, and cultural competence and to surface and confront the ways in which they contribute to racial vulnerability of students?
- Are your practices and policies grounded in the understanding that all learning is social and emotional and that all students are oriented to opportunity and belonging in our communities and schools?
- To what extent do you use SEL practices to facilitate healing from the effects of systemic oppression, build cross-race alliances, and create joyful, liberatory learning environments?
- Do your policies and practices build new opportunity structures and pathways to existing opportunities, rather than reproduce racial inequity?

For more information, see the [National Equity Project](#), which proposes practices for advancing education equity through SEL.

## **Cultural Responsiveness**

Culture is a complex concept. At times culture is defined by race or ethnicity. It may be tempting to attempt to distill different cultures into a set of rules in which a person can become competent (and thereby avoid offending those who come from those cultures). However, this rule-setting attempt to better connect with individuals who come from different cultures is inappropriate. Culture is fluid and dynamic, with variations within cultural groups based on race, ethnicity, age, gender identity, sexual identity, immigration experience, and community type (e.g., rural, urban) (Petrokubi, Bates, & Malinis, 2019). Although many broad behaviors and SEL competencies (e.g., self-awareness or social awareness) are found across cultures, the way they are defined, expressed, and achieved is socially and culturally influenced (Petrokubi, Bates, & Malinis, 2019; Simmons, Brackett, & Adler, 2018).

Culturally responsive approaches draw upon students’ unique strengths and experiences while orienting learning in relation to individuals’ cultural context (Gay, 2013). Cultural responsiveness addresses existing issues of power and privilege and can empower all students in ways that respect and honor their intersecting cultural influences. Social emotional competencies such as



self-awareness and social awareness are necessary to recognize the influence of one’s own culture and to interact with others in a culturally responsive way.

**Example of a Washington Standards Benchmarks and Indicators That Consider Cultural Responsiveness (see Standards, Benchmarks and Indicators in the SEL Resource Package for a complete list)**

SOCIAL AWARENESS – Individuals have the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures

Benchmark 4B: Demonstrates an awareness and respect for similarities and differences among community, cultural, and social groups.

Early Elementary	Late Elementary	Middle School	High School/Adult
With adult assistance, I can identify ways that people and groups are similar and different.	I can identify how backgrounds can be similar and different and can demonstrate acceptance of differing social beliefs and perspectives.	I can practice and adapt clear strategies for accepting, respecting, and supporting similarities and differences between myself and others.	I can identify how perspectives and biases affect interactions with others and how advocacy for the rights of others contributes to the common good.

Delivering a culturally responsive education requires ongoing attention to attitudes, environments, curricula, teaching strategies, and family/community involvement efforts. To be culturally responsive, we must use culturally competent and responsive approaches: fully engage with the students, families, and staff who comprise our school communities; support educators in recognizing their own cultural perspectives; and identify SEL approaches that are culturally responsive (see the *Culturally Responsive Practices* Brief).

*Considerations for Implementation*

To implement a culturally responsive SEL effort, consider the following questions:

- What supports do you have in place to allow adults in your school to critically examine their own socio-cultural identities and biases?
- What professional learning opportunities on the importance of respecting cultural differences are available to adults in your school?
- What types of curricular and instructional materials related to the cultures of your students do you have available to teachers?
- In what ways does the school provide support for adults in the school to get to know individual students’ past experiences?
- To what extent do teachers take an interest in, and use in their teaching, students’ past experiences, home and community culture, and world in and out of school?
- To what extent does your school build inclusive classroom environments?



For more information, see the Equity Assistance Center at Education Northwest’s [Culturally Responsive Teaching Guide](#).

## Universal Design

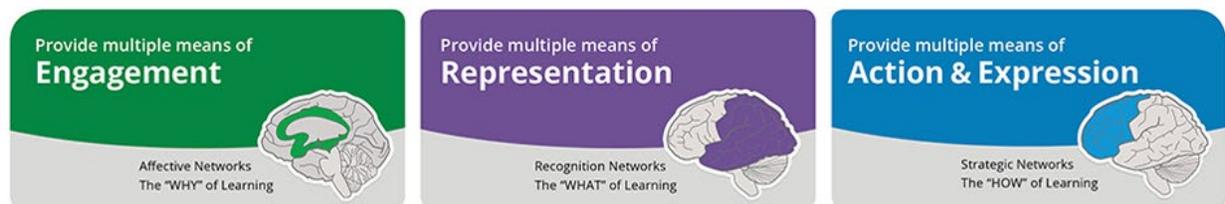
Learners vary in how they perceive, engage with, and execute a task (CAST, 2018). Schools and educators must expect variability among learners and plan in advance for ways to ensure access to SEL instruction and opportunities to practice SEL skills for all learners.

We know our schools include diverse learners with various abilities and disabilities. Designing learning environments that take into account this variability reduces barriers and recognizes the strengths of learners. [The Center for Applied Special Technology \(CAST\)](#), a leading organization in the field of education design and implementation, explains that universal design for learning “aims to change the design of the environment rather than to change the learner. When environments are intentionally designed to reduce barriers, all learners can engage in rigorous, meaningful learning” (CAST, n. d.)

The concept of universal design originates in designing physical environments that are inclusive. If a district were planning to build a new middle school in 2020, it would not consider breaking ground with a design that left out a ramp for wheelchair users, or a fire alarm system with both visual and audio signals. Similarly, we should not be comfortable “breaking ground” on a new SEL program without planning in advance how it will incorporate accessibility and flexibility for different learners.

UDL is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on cognitive neuroscience. [The UDL Guidelines](#) provide educators with specific, concrete suggestions, applicable to any discipline or domain of learning to ensure broad access for all learners. The guidelines cover strategies for offering multiple means for representing knowledge or understanding and for presenting new material. The UDL Guidelines are organized according to three principles of UDL as illustrated in Figure 5: Engagement, Representation, and Action and Expression. Each principle is broken down into guidelines, and each guideline has “checkpoints” with more detailed suggestions.

**Figure 5. Universal Design for Learning Principles**



Source: UDL Guidelines. <http://udlguidelines.cast.org/more/about-graphic-organizer>

The Washington SEL Implementation Guide provides an opportunity to engage universal design principles from the planning stages through implementation and review. When schools and educational institutions implementing SEL commit to the concepts outlined in the Implementation Guide, they will create an alliance of educators, families, and community professionals who can collaborate and share best practices for universal design in SEL.



## Considerations for Implementation

To implement an SEL effort that incorporates principles of universal design, consider the following questions:

- How are you considering variability in students' reading, listening comprehension, communication, and other skills when you select and design SEL curricula and lesson plans?
- How do you consider variability in students' social emotional and academic development when teaching and integrating social emotional skills?
- What universal design approach do you use to maximize "desirable challenges" (such as the challenge to meet high standards) and minimize "undesirable" ones (such as frustration and boredom), and identify how SEL can better equip students to react to both?
- How are you intentional in the student-level data you collect, analyze, and use to determine students' SEL needs, and are the data available to the right people at the right time to influence learning conditions for students?
- In what ways are classroom teachers provided ongoing professional learning opportunities to support the provision of a safe and supportive learning environment, conditions for collaboration and community, and opportunities to practice social emotional skills for all students?
- How are appropriate professionals/teachers empowered to conduct small group and/or more targeted social emotional learning interventions for students who need extra support?
- Which systems are in place to recognize the need for and provide individualized social emotional intervention and goal setting when needed?

*For more information, see Ohio's [UDL](#) and [UDL and SEL](#) webpage, which provides materials that highlight how UDL can be incorporated into SEL.*

## Trauma-Informed Practices

Trauma is broadly defined as "any experience in which a person's internal resources are not adequate to cope with external stressors" (Davidson, 2017, p. 4). It can be provoked by one-time experiences (such as divorce or the death of a family member) or ongoing experiences (such as abuse and neglect). Trauma may also be a collective experience, such as the historical trauma Native American and Alaska Native communities have suffered. Historical trauma is "cumulative, collective emotional and psychological injury over the lifespan and across generations resulting



from a history of group trauma experiences” (Petrokubi, Bates, & Malinis, 2019, p. 5). [Washington State’s SEL Module](#) has a segment devoted to this subject of common approaches to selecting and adapting evidence-based programs to meet the needs of all students.

The potential effects of trauma on children and youth who have had adverse childhood experiences<sup>2</sup> must be considered when striving for an equitable approach to learning, including SEL (DeCandia & Guarino, 2015; Thompson, 2014). A trauma-sensitive approach recognizes the unique strengths and challenges of children and youth in light of the adversities they have faced. Exposure to trauma can have neurological effects that impede the learning process as well as students’ ability to cope with stress (Cantor et al., 2018). Because of this, teachers must be aware of the need to adapt practices to better serve students experiencing the effects of trauma and adjust their thinking about trauma-triggered behaviors (Walkley & Cox, 2013). Adults who experience secondary effects of working with students who are affected by trauma also need support themselves (Davidson, 2017; Petrokubi, Bates, & Malinis, 2019). It is also important to note that children in under-resourced living environments are at greater risk for chronic traumatic exposure and its effects (Blair & Raver 2016).

Fortunately, educators can play a powerful role in helping students to build resilience through supportive relationships and trauma-informed teaching practices. Trauma-informed practices are grounded in the following (DeCandia & Guarino, 2015):

- Understanding of adverse childhood experiences and their prevalence
- Recognition of the signs and symptoms of trauma
- Understanding of the effects of trauma on the developing brain
- Recognition of the survival strategies employed by students who have experienced trauma
- Responses that ensure a physically and emotionally safe learning environment
- Commitment to fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices
- Active measures to resist re-traumatization

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2008) provides guidance on how school personnel can help a student with traumatic grief. Trauma-informed practices can include informing school administrations and school counselors/psychologists about concerns about a student and making yourself available to talk about experiences of trauma. Teachers can be flexible in balancing daily school expectations with sensitivity to students’ experiences of difficulty and use strategies to encourage self-regulation skills.

SEL can be an empowering tool for youth who have experienced trauma, as it can afford

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<sup>2</sup> The common definition of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) involves stressful or traumatic events experienced before age 18 that fall into three broad domains: abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction (e.g., Burke Harris & Renschler, 2015). ACEs can include experiences such as abuse, parental separation or divorce, parental substance abuse, and parental mental illness. ACEs can also include personal victimization, hunger, disturbances in family functioning, loss of a parent, challenging peer relationships, and poor health), and ecological risk factors, including community violence, economic hardship, racial and other forms of discrimination, and stressful experiences within the school (e.g., Cantor et al., 2018; Wade, Shea, Rubin, & Wood, 2014).



students greater self-awareness and management skills to cope, social awareness and skills to interact appropriately with others despite the effects of trauma, and decision-making skills to navigate life circumstances from a foundation of social emotional competency (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron, & Osher, 2019; Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015). SEL also helps to create a climate in which all youth, including youth who have experienced trauma, feel respected and supported. A focus on SEL gives educators an opportunity to focus on building positive relationships with students, to partner with their families, and to collaborate with other youth-serving organizations in their school communities. These relationships and partnerships provide a foundation both for trauma-informed responses and for supporting social emotional learning. In this way, trauma-informed practices can be thought of as “healing-centered” practices.

States are beginning to connect SEL and trauma-informed practices at all levels of the school system. For example, [Tennessee](#) calls the integration of social and personal competencies schoolwide and in classrooms a “buffer to the effects of trauma” (p. 8) and calls for a trauma-informed approach to SEL implementation. [New York](#) does the same (giving special attention to the need for educator support regarding the implementation of trauma-informed practices), and points to external resources. In addition, [Michigan](#) recently developed an online module connecting SEL and trauma. [Delaware](#) and [Wisconsin](#) connect trauma-informed practices to their SEL work. (for further information see *National Environmental Scan* in the Resource Package supporting documents).



## *Considerations for Implementation*

To implement a trauma-informed SEL effort, consider the following questions:

- To what extent are adults in your school provided ongoing professional learning opportunities on the effects of adverse childhood experiences and resulting trauma on learning and behavior?
- To what extent are adults in your school supported in the implementation of both (1) universal strategies that are trauma-informed and (2) customizable strategies in working with students experiencing the effects of trauma?
- To what extent do adults take a strength-based approach in working with students?
- To what extent does your school employ policies and practices such as restorative justice, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), wraparound mental health services, and trauma-sensitivity training—practices that move away from punitive and exclusionary discipline practices, and build a “healing” culture and climate?
- To what extent does your school encourage and sustain open and regular communication for everyone in the school community?
- To what extent does your school use data to identify vulnerable students and determine outcomes and strategies for continuous quality improvement?
- What tiers of support and flexible accommodations does your school provide to address different students’ needs?
- To what extent does your school provide access, voice, and ownership to staff, students, and community?
- To what extent does your school support adult awareness of one’s own history or ongoing experience of trauma; how it may affect interactions with students, families, and colleagues; and strategies to recognize and cope with the secondary trauma that can result from working with students of varied backgrounds?

For more information, OSPI provides [10 Principles of a Compassionate School](#); also see [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators](#).



# Essential Elements of the Washington SEL Implementation Guide

In this section, we discuss each of the essential elements of the SEL Implementation Guide in more detail. Each element is composed of multiple components, and for each component, there are potential action steps for successful implementation and linked resources for further information about how to implement the component in your school. The steps listed here are not a comprehensive list of activities, but suggested work that schools and districts may pursue.

**Figure 6. Essential Elements of the SEL Implementation Guide**



## Build Adult Capacity

Educators play an essential role in creating safe and supportive learning environments; therefore, building the capacity of the adults in the school setting is critical to shaping the culture of the school and setting the stage for positive outcomes for children (Jones & Kahn, 2017). Building adult capacity starts with creating a strong leadership team that can begin to implement SEL. Adult capacity is strengthened through the creation of a vision statement, a needs and resource assessment, and a comprehensive implementation plan. SEL involves adult learning and unlearning; it is important for adults to reflect on their own social emotional awareness and to identify factors or situations that either trigger distress or expand their ability to connect, learn, and grow as adults (Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016). Effective SEL requires adults to shift their mindsets, skills, and behaviors to model SEL and promote equity and inclusion for all students. Building the space and time for self-reflection involves creating a professional learning system that will support SEL efforts. [Washington State's SEL Module](#) has a focus on the importance of adult SEL to meet the needs of all students.

## Create a Leadership Team

An important early step in SEL implementation is the formation of a leadership team. Research has shown that engagement and active support from school leaders is the biggest predictor of



whether whole-school implementation takes hold and has a positive impact on students' growth (Devaney, O'Brien, Resnik, Keister, & Weissberg, 2006).

The leadership team's responsibilities should include developing a shared vision for SEL, setting realistic goals, overseeing the process of implementation, facilitating clear communication, and monitoring outcomes. When assembling a team, school leaders need to consider the skills and resources that team members bring to the table (such as existing knowledge of SEL, enthusiasm for the vision of schoolwide SEL, knowledge of school culture and operations, knowledge of data collection and feedback processes, communication and collaboration skills, and time to commit to the work of implementation).

School leaders need to look beyond the school building for leadership team members. Families and community professionals can bring valuable knowledge, perspectives, and resources of their own. The family is the central place where specific skills and competencies (as well as broader attitudes and values) are formed (National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development, 2018). It is valuable to include families in SEL planning efforts, to proactively seek their input, and to maintain ongoing communication. Family members can offer insight into the diverse cultural strengths students bring to the classroom. Community partners working with youth see another side of our students' lives and have perspectives that can enrich the process of implementing SEL at school. Building relationships with families and community members and involving them in every stage of the implementation process builds trust and enables the leadership team to be more understanding of, and responsive to, the needs and values of the communities to which they belong.

## Action Steps

Schools can do the following to create a strong leadership team:

- A leadership team should include a school leader (e.g., administrator, lead teacher, or support staff), representation from various positions within the school (e.g., administrators, teachers, student support staff), and partners representing the broader community.
- Key partners (teachers, students, families, building staff, community partners) representing diverse perspectives and backgrounds should be engaged right away for input into every stage of planning to ensure cultural sensitivity throughout the process. When selecting key partners, consider who will be most involved in or affected by SEL implementation.
- Ensure that there is Tribal consultation and collaboration and that this representation meets all federal requirements. Include the Tribal designee from a local Tribal government as part of the leadership team to ensure that implementation of SEL is a collaborative, trustful, and respectful process that recognizes the sovereignty of Native communities and Native students.



Once the leadership team is created, it needs to:

- **Learn** background information about SEL and what’s happening at the state and district level and engage in SEL professional development to more deeply understand and model SEL best practices.
- **Communicate** with the state and district, within the leadership team, and with a broader community of stakeholders and coordinate competing initiatives.
- **Plan** implementation, oversee professional training and development, guide implementation to ensure plans are being implemented as written, and set reasonable goals and expectations.
- **Assess** and collect data on the success of implementation and use the information to continuously improve practices accordingly.

## Resources

[CASEL SEL School Implementation Guide: Create a Team](#). This section of the schoolwide Implementation Guide outlines the process for recruiting, forming, and sustaining an SEL leadership team to manage the SEL planning and implementation process for the school.

[School Climate Resource Package](#). This package is full of tips and resources for improving school climate, including effective strategies for developing a school leadership team. The guide was developed by the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE) at American Institutes for Research (AIR), contracted by the U.S. Department of Education.

[NIEA Consultation Guides](#). The National Indian Education Association provides three guides to [Building Relationships With Tribes: A Native Process of ESSA Consultation](#). This resource is meant to provide states and districts the high-level strategies necessary to build trusting, reciprocal, and long-lasting relationships with the Tribal nations.

## Create a Vision

An early task of the leadership team is to craft a vision statement that expresses the community’s aspirations with regard to social emotional learning. At a team meeting, members might be asked to reflect together on some of the following questions: What are our core values, and who are we striving to become? What skills, understanding, and relationships do we want members of our community to develop? What kind of culture are we intending to build?

A vision statement can impart a powerful, shared sense of the importance of SEL implementation. Team members work together to craft a draft of the vision statement that conveys their hopes and expectations for SEL. By seeking feedback on the draft vision statement from key stakeholders, the leadership team invites the community to participate in a dialogue about the culture we seek to build together to nurture the social emotional and academic lives of young people. After feedback has been collected, the leadership team creates a final vision statement that can bring together and motivate the community and that reminds them of the goals that the work of implementation will serve. The vision statement should also be used to



drive the school's SEL efforts and will provide structure and coordination to effectively implement that vision.

**Why?** A vision statement with clear goals can serve as a rallying cry to generate commitment to SEL throughout the system and to provide a focal point for an aligned and integrated approach—it ensures that everyone is on the same page in terms of purpose, goals, and methods of SEL implementation.

**Who participates?** The leadership team crafts the vision with input from key stakeholders to ensure broad understanding and acceptance and cultural responsiveness.

**What?** An SEL plan should include a framework for supporting children in developing SEL skills.

## Action Steps

To create a vision statement, consider the following:

- Consider including language that reflects the overarching values and ensures broad understanding, acceptance, and cultural responsiveness.
- Brainstorm innovative ideas with established and new partners.
- Ask stakeholders to engage in the vision development process.
- Once you have developed your vision statement, consider developing talking points or a communication guide (or both) for communicating your vision, plan, and why SEL is important (both internally and externally).

## Resources

[CASEL School SEL Implementation Guide: Developing a Shared Vision](#). This resource outlines the what, where, when, why, and who of a schoolwide vision and plan for SEL implementation. The document includes a rubric for assessing the development of a shared vision and goals for SEL, a step-by-step process for how to engage in the work, vision statement examples, and a conversation guide for vision conversations with your team.

## Assess Needs and Resources

Many schools are already implementing practices that may or may not fit within the Washington SEL Implementation Guide. These practices may need to be identified and aligned to the Implementation Guide. To help with this process, schools and districts can conduct resource and needs assessments to support their SEL efforts. A needs assessment is a systemic process designed to assess the strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement within an organization (Corbett & Redding, 2017). It is important to consider multiple kinds of data when conducting the assessment (e.g., policy and procedural data, demographic data, student performance data, and perception data) to capture a robust picture of all factors affecting and affected by SEL in the school. Needs assessments give the leadership team an opportunity to understand the



needs of students and staff; resource assessments help leadership teams understand the available materials to support the effort, including understanding the various efforts underway that already support SEL.

## Action Steps

Before conducting a needs assessment, develop a comprehensive plan. The completed assessment plan should yield the what, when, who, how, and why of the SEL program (Wrabel, Hamilton, Whitaker, & Grant, 2018). Additional steps in developing a needs assessment include the following:

- Assess available resources, priorities, and systems to support SEL—at the district, school, classroom, and individual role levels (including support staff, cafeteria workers, maintenance personnel, community partners, etc.).
- Identify data sources that can inform a needs assessment for SEL. Sources can include administrative data, surveys and observations of school/classroom environments, professional development offerings and participation, information about existing SEL curricula in school and during out-of-school time, district and school SEL priorities and goals, local conditions (neighborhood conditions, family poverty levels, adverse childhood experiences), and youth SEL competency assessments.
- Needs assessments should be used to identify potential sources of inequity; once identified, plans should be developed to address them.
- The leadership team (with family- and community-partnership feedback) can ask guiding questions to structure the work: What are our existing resources that will help us in this work? What existing programs can we build upon? Who can help us in the work?
- Consider also assessing the degree to which individuals within an organization are motivated and have the capacity to take on SEL implementation.

## Resources

[CASEL Schoolwide SEL Implementation Rubric](#). This resource includes a rubric to guide schools through a review of their current level of SEL implementation. The rubric helps schools identify needs and resources, set goals, and develop concrete action steps for SEL. It can also be used as a tool by school teams as part of an internal information gathering or a quality improvement process.

[Using Needs Assessments for School and District Improvement](#). This guide, from the Center on School Turnaround, is designed to help state and local education agencies and schools design needs assessments that are aligned with the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA).



[Investing in Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning: Companion Guide to Social Emotional Learning Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review](#). This RAND Corporation report provides guidance for schools on using federal ESSA funds to select and implement a high-quality SEL program.

## Create an Implementation Plan

Develop an implementation plan based on the needs and resource assessments and align this plan to your vision.

A schoolwide or community-wide plan for SEL serves a number of roles:

- Creates a roadmap to ensure successful, high-quality SEL implementation,
- Communicates to the community that the school is committed to the work,
- Guides and keeps the school on track to achieve the vision and mission,
- Articulates information about professional learning and curricula and the process of implementation, communication, and evaluation,
- Includes tasks, timelines, milestones, division of responsibilities, and resources, and
- Aligns with district and state guidelines.

Implementation is an iterative process and involves all district stakeholders in continuous cycles of improvement. The implementation process is purposeful and is described in enough detail that an independent observer can identify the specific set of activities being carried out and measure their strength (National Implementation Research Network, 2019). According to the [National Implementation Research Network](#), a strong implementation plan defines **what** effective interventions need to be carried out, **how** they will be carried out, **who** will carry them out, and **where** they will be carried out. Good implementation is the bedrock of an SEL program's success and largely depends on thoughtful guidance by school and district leaders who are strategic, invested, and supportive.

Improving the SEL skills, culture, and climate of your school is more than just choosing and implementing curricula that explicitly teach SEL skills (although this should be a part of it). Your plan should include professional learning, communication, and assessment. Your plan should also embed SEL into the ecosystem of your school and should be integrated into policies, procedures, academic curricula, staff practices, and existing frameworks (such as multi-tiered systems of support [MTSS], PBIS, wellness programs, and trauma-informed practices).

### Action Steps

Your school can take the following steps for successful SEL implementation:

- Identify the *who*, *what*, *how*, and *where* of your implementation plan.
- As in the planning process, keep key stakeholders engaged to ensure broad perspectives and generate wide understanding and acceptance.



- Develop a communication plan for how you'll explain SEL to parents, teachers, community partners, and others. Incorporate inclusive and varied ways for communicating to all stakeholders.
- Articulate long-term and short-term outcome goals for your plan as well as how your school will measure success.
- Plan the rollout of the SEL effort, including ways in which SEL will be embedded throughout multiple initiatives, how it will be explicitly taught to students, and how it will become integrated as a way of doing things in the school.

## Resources

[The National Implementation Research Network's Active Implementation Hub](#). This resource provides a set of online materials, tools, and guides to promote the knowledge and practice of implementation science.

[CASEL Guide for Schoolwide SEL: Communication Planning](#). This online resource provides support for schools as they work on developing communication strategies to keep stakeholders engaged and excited about SEL implementation. The guide's [section on Foundational Learning](#) also has some helpful resources for communicating the "big ideas" behind SEL, including a sample introductory presentation and a list of supporting research.

[SEL: Feedback and Communication Insights from the Field](#) (The Wallace Foundation). This document explores the language around SEL and defines the many different terms that are used around the country to define both social emotional competencies and skills. The document also discusses the research it draws on and which terms were the most motivating and understandable.

## Create Professional Learning for SEL

Meaningful, intensive, and ongoing professional learning opportunities for educators are vital for strengthening and sustaining SEL efforts (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012). A cohesive professional system shows educators the relevance of professional learning to their daily work:

If teachers sense a disconnect between what they are urged to do in a professional development activity and what they are required to do according to local curriculum guidelines, texts, assessment practices, and so on—that is, if they cannot easily implement the strategies they learn, and the new practices are not supported or reinforced—then the professional development tends to have little impact (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009, p. 10).

Teachers often understand the importance of SEL, but they do not feel that they have the time or resources to implement SEL in their classrooms (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). Schools and districts need to ensure that staff receive pre-service training and ongoing, job-embedded professional learning related to SEL (including coaching and professional learning communities); adequate



time to plan, teach, and integrate SEL; and time to collaborate across roles (e.g., counselors and teachers) to better support students. To support teachers in their efforts to implement SEL-related practices, coaches and administrators can observe teacher practice and provide feedback (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). Key training topics include culturally responsive SEL, developmentally appropriate SEL, and family engagement in SEL.

Consider reviewing [Washington State's SEL Module](#), learning segment 3: *Creating a Professional Culture on SEL*. It is a starting point for identifying the importance of adults' social emotional competencies—for their work with students and their own well-being. The module also provides strategies and action steps for building a culture focused on SEL.

## Action Steps

Schools can create a professional learning system by taking the following steps:

- Develop professional learning for ongoing activities, implementation, and action planning based on the needs and resource assessment.
- Embed multiple forms of professional learning on SEL, including workshops, virtual learning experiences, book studies, professional learning communities, coaching and ongoing support.
- Embed SEL activities within all professional development activities, such as welcoming rituals and optimistic closures, so that adults can see the benefits of SEL for themselves.
- Create time during the school day for adults to meet with students with an agenda for relationship building and non-academically based conversation.
- Provide opportunities and spaces for adults to reflect on their own social emotional competencies and attune to their own emotional well-being.
- Connect professional development opportunities with existing curriculum guidelines, assessment practices, teacher effectiveness frameworks, and initiatives so that educators can easily implement the strategies they learn.
- Recognize and support *all* adult staff within the school—as well as families and communities—as important implementers of SEL. Provide learning opportunities for all adults who interact with students, equipping them to model social emotional competencies consistently throughout the school day.
- Consider partnering with ELOs, community-based organizations, and parents/families in offering professional development opportunities that promote SEL.
- Incorporate anti-bias professional development and personal reflection tools that support adults in being receptive to diverse perspectives of students, families, and community members (see <https://gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/SelfAssessmentSEL.pdf>).



## Resources

Sample documents that focus on educator professional learning related to SEL include the following:

[Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles](#) (p. 3). California’s third SEL principle—build capacity—emphasizes the need to provide pre-service SEL training and ongoing professional development for educators.

[Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice](#). Created by Massachusetts educators, this guidebook includes SEL implementation and learning tools for districts, schools, and educators that are aligned to the MA Educator Evaluation Framework and that promote evidence-based best practices for inclusion.

[Guidelines on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning Curricula](#) (pp. 7–8). This document contains guidelines for Massachusetts schools and districts on how to effectively implement social and emotional learning curricula for students in Grades K–12.

[Connecting Social and Emotional Learning to Michigan's School Improvement Framework](#) (pp. 18–19). Michigan developed this guide as a companion to the selected Michigan SEL competencies. The guide provides support to Michigan educators and caregivers in integrating SEL into the fabric of the school at all levels, including early childhood settings.

[Social Emotional Learning District Implementation and Professional Development Guidance](#) (pp. 8–9). This guide is aligned with Minnesota’s MTSS, PBIS, the Minnesota Academic Standards, and college and career readiness principles.

[Social Emotional Learning: Essential for Learning, Essential for Life](#) (pp. 28–29). New York’s guide is an introduction to a series of resources, including voluntary statewide SEL benchmarks, a *Guide to Systemic Whole School Implementation*, and a series of school district–developed crosswalks aligning SEL competencies with learning standards in the content areas.

[Incorporating Social and Personal Competencies into Classroom Instruction and Educator Effectiveness: A Toolkit for Tennessee Teachers and Administrators](#). Tennessee defines “social and personal competencies” (SPCs) and developed this toolkit to link instructional practices that promote SPCs with the Tennessee Educator Accelerator Model (TEAM) teacher evaluation process.

[K–12 Social and Personal Competencies Resource Guide](#). Tennessee’s guide provides instructional strategies for each grade band so that educators have the tools they need to be able to support students’ growth in social and personal competencies.

[SEL Coaching Toolkit](#). AIR developed this toolkit to support coaches and administrators as they observe practices that support the development of social emotional skills in classrooms.

[CASEL District Resource Center: Professional Learning](#). This online guide for districts outlines the steps to design and implement an SEL professional learning program for schools.

## Create Conditions to Support Students’ SEL



Successful implementation of SEL requires a systemic approach that addresses the climate and culture, links SEL to school policies and practices, and incorporates SEL into classroom practice (Osher et al., 2016). Students develop social emotional competencies when they are given opportunities to learn in a safe environment in which they feel welcome, respected, and connected (Osher & Berg, 2017). Supportive and attuned relationships with adults who push students to meet their goals are essential to students' engagement and learning (Osher, Cantor, Berg, Steyer, & Rose, 2018). Students also learn and develop social emotional skills through explicit instruction on these skills, accompanied by multiple opportunities to practice and generalize their skills across academic disciplines and through a variety of authentic activities in the multiple contexts in which the students live (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Hamedani, Zheng, & Darling-Hammond, 2015). Taking time to focus on the social emotional aspects of learning is a critical part of engaging culturally and linguistically diverse students in rigorous academic learning (Hammond, 2016). The *SEL Standards, Benchmarks and Indicators* in the SEL Resource Package has *Environmental and Instructional Conditions for Learning* identified for each of the 17 benchmarks.

## School Climate and Culture

The climate and culture of a school influences the implementation of schoolwide innovations. School climate stems from people's experiences of school life; it can be thought of as the collective "mood" of the school (Gruenert, 2008). Climate, which can vary based on events and changes in the school environment, influences and is influenced by school culture. Culture is a product of relationships among individuals and stakeholder groups, a school's social norms (what is considered acceptable and unacceptable behavior within the school community), and the expectations individuals have for themselves and for others (Gruenert, 2008). School culture encompasses issues directly related to equity, including the physical and emotional safety of students and school staff, the orderliness and welcoming nature of classrooms and public spaces, and the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). SEL plays a key role in the cultivation of school climate and culture and vice versa; a district or school's way of being is a vital springboard for SEL efforts.

### Action Steps

When creating the conditions to support students' social emotional learning, schools can:

- Recognize the explicit connection between school culture and equity.
- Establish shared rules and norms to improve school climate with input from youth to promote acceptance and a sense of fairness.
- Support adults in modeling SEL competencies. This can be supported as part of the professional learning systems put in place to promote SEL, in presentations during staff meetings, and through other methods that provide adults with the tools to commit to practicing healthy SEL skills in ways that are visible to students.



- Build relationships of trust and respect.
- Use a strength-based approach to building community and relationships between students, teachers, and support staff.

## Resources

[School Climate and Social Emotional Learning: The Integration of Two Approaches](#). This brief from AIR reviews research on how positive school climates support SEL and how improved SEL contributes to improved school climate in elementary and secondary schools.

[Caring Communities: Linking School Culture and Student Success](#). This case study from Aspen Institute’s National Commission of Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (SEAD) highlights intentional approaches to creating safe and supportive school climate and discusses its connection to SEAD development.

[School Climate Resource Package](#). This toolkit is full of tips and resources for improving school climate. The guide was developed by AIR and the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSE), contracted by the U.S. Department of Education.

[OSPI Online Module – SEL 2: Embedding SEL Schoolwide](#). This professional development module provides guidance to school leaders on integrating SEL as a core element of a schoolwide educational approach, including connections to school policies, instructional practices, and the vision and mission of the school.

[Understanding and Cultivating Social Emotional Learning](#). This brief is a research-based primer from Education Northwest for partners that are just beginning to think in new ways about SEL. Provides guidance on how to cultivate seven SEL skills.

## Link SEL to Existing School Policies and Practices

Districts and schools can intentionally embed SEL into every aspect of the school ecosystem, moving beyond the perception of SEL as an “add-on” and instead viewing it as a “way of doing things.” SEL can be integrated into the school improvement plan, the [Washington K–12 SEL Standards and Benchmarks](#) and existing student learning standards, the [Washington Integrated Student Support Protocol, Multi-Tiered System of Supports](#) (MTSS), discipline policies and practices (PBIS), universal design for learning, [educator effectiveness](#) (the Teacher/Principal Evaluation Program and 5 Dimensions of Learning and the Readiness Assessment: Getting Ready for Teacher Evaluation [TPEP], 5D+ (University of Washington, Center for Educational Leadership, 2012), discipline, mental health, bullying, wellness programs, existing teacher evaluation frameworks, family and community partnerships, [trauma-responsive practices](#), and cultural responsiveness. These efforts can help educators to build cohesion and avoid a fragmented approach to serving the whole child. Connecting SEL to existing policies and practices also includes efforts that focus on the general functioning of the school, such as budgeting (finance), hiring personnel, and establishing board policies.



## Action Steps

To link SEL to existing school policies and practices, schools can:

- Take a systemic approach to implementing SEL, recognizing that schools and districts can promote social emotional development by embedding the philosophy of SEL (i.e., supporting the whole child) in school and district policies, procedures, and programs.
- Implement quality schoolwide SEL in collaboration with youth, families, and community partners, so that that SEL is not an add-on but a part of the fabric of school life.
- Distill and connect SEL with other important initiatives and efforts that occur within the school ecosystem and highlight the overlaps and complementary nature of these practices.
- Recognize that school-based policies and practices affect the school climate and culture, which is intrinsically linked to the social emotional growth of every student.
- Promote and reinforce practices and strategies that promote an inclusive, safe (emotionally and physically) environment for both youth and adults.

## Resources

[OSPI Online Module—SEL 2: Embedding SEL Schoolwide](#). This professional development module provides guidance to school leaders on integrating SEL as a core element of a schoolwide educational approach, including connections to school policies, instructional practices, and the vision and the mission of the school.

[LEAD Tool—Leadership for Equity Assessment and Development Tool](#). The LEAD Tool™ helps school leadership teams start dialogue and sustain action in expanding educational opportunities, improving school climate, and attaining equitable outcomes. It examines practices and policies through the lens of 10 research-based equitable practices, and it helps teams bring families, communities, and other stakeholders into the conversation. Teams can use the rubrics to assess their personal and organizational strengths, challenges, and progress.

[CASEL Guide for Schoolwide SEL](#). This guide from CASEL gives broad guidance for school and district planning teams on how to select high-quality and sustainable SEL programs. The guide provides three key principles for program selection: engaging diverse stakeholders, integrating programs into a systemic and unified approach to SEL, and considering local context.

## Focus on Classroom-Based Approaches That Promote SEL

SEL implementation needs to be intentional and integrated throughout the school day, inside and outside the classroom. Within the classroom, SEL can take the form of teaching skills in lesson format. There are a variety of strategies teachers can plan for and implement to promote SEL within the classroom. These strategies include building a positive school climate, targeting instruction to support SEL, integrating SEL into academic instruction, and incorporating general



teaching practices that promote the application of social emotional skills (Dusenbury, Calin, Domitrovich, & Weissberg, 2015; Yoder, 2014). Each approach is important in creating a comprehensive system of support for student social emotional development in classrooms. It is important for educators to embed SEL throughout schooling and afterschool activities so that students can identify and practice the social emotional competencies they will need to use in their lives.

Teachers have research-based strategies to promote SEL in the classroom. Many are low-cost, targeted strategies (Jones, Bailey, Brush, & Kahn, 2017). Recent work has identified common practices that can be found in effective SEL programs (Jones, Bailey, et al., 2017; Yoder, 2014). These include discussion, didactic instruction, read-alouds, activities that teach SEL vocabulary, use of SEL tools and handouts, writing activities that ask students to write about a personal experience related to an SEL theme, drawing activities, art or creative projects, visual displays such as charts and posters, videos depicting children in challenging or playground situations that prompt discussion about SEL, singing that reinforces an SEL theme, active practice of SEL skills, role-playing, games, kinesthetic activities, and activities chosen by teachers from a range of options. Similarly, 10 teaching practices that promote the social emotional and academic components of the classroom have been identified to help integrate SEL throughout the instructional cycle (Yoder, 2014). These practices include student-centered discipline, teacher language, responsibility and choice, warmth and support, cooperative learning, classroom discussions, self-reflection and self-assessment, balanced instruction, academic press and expectations, and competence building-modeling/practicing/feedback/coaching.

## Action Steps

To identify classroom-based approaches that promote SEL, schools can:

- Build a positive school climate and culture, with warm and supportive student–teacher relationships, to set the context.
- Embed SEL into everyday experiences inside and outside the classroom.
- Explicitly teach SEL.
- Integrate SEL into academic instruction.
- Regularly build research-based strategies into everyday classroom practice.
- Build adult and student competence by modeling SEL through adult behaviors, language, and interactions with students, providing regular opportunities to practice SEL, feedback loops, and coaching.
- Take time to self-reflect and self-assess attitudes and behaviors toward students.
- Implement balanced instruction.
- Build responsibility, choice, and cooperative learning into classroom instruction.



## Resources

[Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice](#). Created by Massachusetts educators, this guidebook includes tools for districts, schools, and educators that are aligned to the state's Educator Evaluation Framework. The tools promote evidence-based best practices for inclusion following the principles of UDL, PBIS, and SEL.

[Navigating SEL From the Inside Out: Looking Inside and Across 25 Leading SEL Programs: A Practical Resource for Schools and OST Providers](#). This guide from the Harvard Graduate School of Education was created to help elementary schools and ELOs compare curricula and methods from 25 leading SEL programs. It has detailed profiles of each SEL curriculum.

[Two Classroom Strategies to Reduce Students' Math Anxiety](#). Developed in partnership with Washington STEM, this Regional Education Lab (REL) Northwest video demonstrates two evidence-based strategies to promote the integration of SEL and math instruction.

[Inclusive Teaching Toolkit](#). Hosted by Western Washington University, this toolkit provides actionable resources for classroom teachers focused on inclusive and multicultural teaching practices. The toolkit is organized around a multi-step approach: prepare, understand, design, and finally, teach. For teachers that are interested in learning more, the toolkit also contains recommendations for books, articles, and additional research.

[OSPI's SEL Online Module Segment 4](#). This segment, titled Integrating SEL in Culturally Responsive Classrooms, can be used as a starting point for integrating SEL into academic instruction.

[Integrating SEL With Academics](#). This CASEL brief provides resources, strategies, and examples from other states on how to integrate SEL with academics.

[Tennessee Social and Personal Competencies Online Modules](#). The Tennessee Department of Education developed online learning modules on 10 teaching practices that promote SEL, such as student-centered discipline, teacher language, classroom discussions, and self-assessment and self-reflection.

## Select and Implement Evidence-Based SEL Programs and Practices

Selecting districtwide or schoolwide SEL programs or practices is an essential part of systemic implementation of SEL, and often educators think of this step first. However, educators should only implement SEL programs and practices once systemwide structures are in place, such as professional learning, coaching support, and support for program fidelity (including appropriate data). Identification of evidence-based programs and practices provides an opportunity for educators to implement a cohesive instructional approach that supports student social emotional development.

Selecting an evidence-based program that meets the needs of the school and community can be complex. Some districts and schools take an entire year to evaluate or pilot different curricula to determine which one best fits their context. The process of selecting evidence-based SEL



programs and practices should include the input and buy-in of teachers and other practitioners, as well as consideration of program/practice alignment to existing resources, district and/or school readiness to begin implementation, and research-based evidence for the effectiveness of the program or practice in a like environment serving a like population.

SEL programs and practices are evidence based when they are “(1) grounded in research, SEL theory, and principles of child and adolescent development and (2) when they have been scientifically evaluated and shown to produce positive outcomes related to students’ skills and behaviors” (CASEL, 2014, p. 51). Research additionally shows that SEL programs and practices are the most effective at producing consistent outcomes when they contain four elements, summarized in the acronym SAFE (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007):

- S**equenced, step-by-step approaches to building skills
- A**ctive forms of learning that require students to practice new skills
- F**ocused time and attention specifically devoted to skill development
- E**xplicit teaching of social emotional skills

SEL efforts are also most successful when they (1) occur within supportive contexts; (2) build adult competencies; (3) acknowledge features of the broader community context; (4) target a key set of skills across multiple domains of development; and (5) set reasonable goals (for more information, see Jones, Brush, et al., 2017).

Because many evidence-based programs and practices exist (CASEL, 2013, 2015), states have created guidance documents for districts and schools to take an informed approach to their adoption. [Washington State’s SEL Module](#) has a segment devoted to this subject of common approaches to selecting and adapting evidence-based programs to meet the needs of all students.

## Action Steps

To select and implement evidence-based practices, schools can:

- Identify practices that are sequenced, active, focused, and explicit.
- Emphasize cultural responsiveness, equity, and student voice in the selection, implementation (and adaptation), and monitoring of SEL curriculum.
- Review the research behind the SEL programs to identify if they have evidence with students who are similar to the ones you serve.
- Ensure the SEL program meets the needs of your students.

## Resources

[What the Research Says on Supporting the Social and Emotional Well-Being of Students. This resource includes](#) free studies and articles on programs and approaches that promote social emotional learning, curated by Education Northwest.

[Washington SEL Online Education Module – Building Foundations and Strategies: Learning Segment 5: Identifying and Selecting Evidence-Based Programs.](#) This professional development



module helps educators select evidence-based SEL programs and provides an overview of existing successful programs, curricula, and frameworks. The module emphasizes the need to meet the needs of all students, integrating concepts of universal design and equity.

[Measuring SEL: Why? What? How?](#) This series of three blog posts from an Education Northwest senior researcher for social emotional learning and equity that focuses on identifying the [why](#), the [what](#), and the [how](#) in order to support and improve the implementation of SEL practices and programs.

[CASEL Guides 2013 and 2015](#). The CASEL Guides provide a systematic framework for evaluating the quality of social emotional programs and apply this framework to identify and rate well-designed, evidence-based SEL programs with potential for broad dissemination to schools across the United States. The guides also share best-practice guidelines for district and school teams on how to select and implement SEL programs. Finally, they offer recommendations for future priorities to advance SEL research and practice.

[Investing in Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning: Companion Guide to Social Emotional Learning Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review](#) (RAND Corporation). This report provides guidance for schools using ESSA federal funds to select and implement a high-quality SEL program.

## Use Data for Continuous Improvement

Districts and schools should collect the data they need to best understand how SEL efforts are being implemented (implementation and fidelity data) and the outcomes of those efforts (outcome data) to examine what is working, what is not working, and what changes or additional supports or resources are needed (Berman, Chaffee, & Sarmiento, 2018; Osher et al., 2008).

There are numerous implementation data elements that can be used to monitor SEL implementation. At the building level, a collaborative schoolwide inquiry—with participation from administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, families, students, counselors, and local community organizations—might collect and analyze data through various methods. These include observations, externally developed SEL measurement tools, climate surveys, document analyses of school practices, data already being collected (such as discipline referrals, grade point averages [GPAs], or graduation rates), and interviews and focus groups for more in-depth voices of education stakeholders. These low-stakes, internal assessments can be used to track trends over time, compare differential impacts across subgroups of students or schools, and guide educators in decision making.

The power of practitioner inquiry is in its ability to bring the context to bear in a critical, reflective, and culturally responsive way to serve all students better. Continuous improvement of SEL implementation is most effective when teachers and administrators who have strong relationships with and deep knowledge of students, families, and communities can conduct fine-grained analyses of how SEL is lived out in their classrooms.



## Action Steps

Schools can successfully use continuous improvement data by using the following guidelines:

- Create a plan to collect both implementation data and student-outcome data.
- Take an inquiry-based approach for gathering purposeful data around a question, analyzing and reflecting on the data, and implementing plans of action that will be documented for the continuing cycle of inquiry.
- Use SEL assessments or benchmarks for continuous improvement and not for diagnosis or identification purposes with individual students.
- Consider integrating SEL measurement (student outcome) data with standard data points collected on students (attendance, behavior, and course performance) to create a holistic, data-driven understanding of student performance.
- Embed adequate professional development opportunities for teachers using SEL-related student data; do not use the data for punishment or stigmatization but rather for appropriate interventions.

## Resources

[CASEL Schoolwide SEL Implementation Guide](#). This interactive online resource leads school administrators through a three-stage process (organize, implement, improve) to schoolwide SEL. The guide provides helpful activities, timelines, and supportive resources.

[CASEL Assessment Guide](#). Resources in the assessment guide include guidance on selecting an assessment, guidance on using student SEL data, a list of SEL assessments, and SEL assessment case studies from schools around the country.

[Investing in Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning](#). With new flexibility under ESSA to use federal funds to support social emotional learning, evidence-based SEL interventions have gained salience. This report, developed by the Wallace Foundation and the RAND Corporation, provides guidance to educators on how to assess local SEL needs and how to identify evidence-based interventions to address those needs. It also gives recommendations on how to implement, monitor, and evaluate these interventions.

[Are You Ready to Assess Social and Emotional Development?](#) This toolkit from AIR includes a brief, a decision tree, and a tools index to help decide whether and how to assess social emotional development.

[Start and Run a Guided PDSA \(Plan-Do-Study-Act\)](#). A PDSA cycle is a basic method of inquiry in improvement research. This online tool developed by the Carnegie Foundation guides schools through the various elements for running PDSA cycles.

[RAND SEL Assessment Finder](#). This web-based tool allows practitioners to search for assessment measures of SEL outcomes. The tool provides additional information on assessments, including administration instructions, the level of demand for teachers and students, what the tools are



designed to measure, and how to use the assessment results.

## **Collaborate with Families, Communities, and ELO Providers**

It takes all of us—families, community partners, students, and schools—to create safe and supportive environments in which students can both access instruction on academic subjects and develop social emotional skills that will influence their success in school, work, and life. Students build social emotional skills in many different environments: families are the first teachers; as children grow, their experiences at school, in ELOs, and in the broader community continue to influence their development (Osher et al., 2018). Students are constantly learning ways of understanding themselves, engaging with others, and making responsible decisions in their interactions at home, in school, and in the community.

Collaborating with families, community members, and ELO providers in the development of SEL initiatives will help educators (who may not share the same cultural or linguistic background) understand the different ways in which students demonstrate social emotional growth, as well as effective ways to teach and reinforce skills in school, at home, and in community settings. To initiate a collaborative approach, a school should consider spending time and resources to bring together families, students, staff, and community members to discuss strategies to develop a collective approach to SEL, to make decisions about curricula, and to participate in efforts to review and support SEL competency development. Collaborating with families benefits students of all backgrounds (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Collaboration with families, schools, and communities also helps in anchoring the four principles that are the foundations of this work: equity, cultural responsiveness, universal design, and trauma-informed practices.

### *Collaborate with Families*

In the effort to involve all stakeholders, the family unit may be the first (but not only) area of focus. Collaboration creates shared responsibility between schools and the families they serve. Collaboration with families should be family driven and culturally competent (Wood, Osher, & Osher, 2018). Family-driven approaches treat families as full partners, giving them a voice and choice when developing policies and practices. Districts and schools must work to incorporate family and community priorities and experiences. When family–school partnerships are family driven and culturally competent, parents and caretakers gain the knowledge and skills to support their children’s academic and social development, become leaders in the school, and shape school and student outcomes (Wood et al., 2018).

School staff can encourage family–school collaborations through a three-tiered approach that includes (1) foundational or universal strategies such as building a welcoming and trusting environment, (2) selective strategies for additional support, such as child care, and (3) intensive strategies to meet individual needs, such as care for a family member with disabilities (Wood, Osher, & Osher, 2018). Home visits are one universal strategy that strengthens cultural competence of staff while also supporting students’ social emotional needs. Parent/caregiver teacher teams are a second strategy that also build relationships and social capital (Foster, 2015;



WestEd, 2017). This strategy involves an annual face-to-face parent/caregiver–teacher conference with the student, and several all-parent group meetings during the year. The group meetings allow parents and caregivers to jointly learn strategies to support their children’s social emotional and academic development and to share strategies with other parents and caregivers.

## Action Steps

Successful family–school partnerships are not stand-alone projects or add-on programs. They must be integrated into the school’s mission and goals. This can be done in the following ways:

- Include diverse families when developing a vision for SEL implementation.
- Develop and institute family-friendly policies.
- Survey families to determine needs, interests, and ideas.
- Offer training for parents on SEL competencies.
- Ensure consistent and timely access to information and use effective communication tools.
- Provide staff and families with collaborative decision making, communication, and leadership training.
- Provide opportunities for parent-to-parent and parent–staff networking.
- Engage families in troubleshooting and finding solutions for students who are struggling.

## Resources

[Creating a More Welcoming and Culturally Responsive School Community to Engage American Indian and Alaska Native Families.](#) This three-part blog series from an Education Northwest practice expert for Indian education focuses on the [importance of engaging](#) family members, and on the [multiple approaches](#) and [concrete activities](#) for directly engaging family members.

[What the Research Says on Engaging Native Families.](#) This resource provides information about research on programs and approaches that promote family engagement, curated by Education Northwest.

[11 Ways Schools Can—and Should—Involve Families in SEL Programming.](#) This article provides a list of tips for schools on involving families in SEL programming and a list of tips for families interested in applying SEL skill-building practices at home. The article is part of the EdSurge guide, *Social Emotional Learning: Why It Matters and How to Foster It*.

[Developing Life Skills in Children: A Roadmap for Communicating with Parents.](#) This roadmap presents findings from a series of focus groups and a national survey that asked parents about their perspectives on social emotional teaching and learning in schools.

[Principles of Equitable Parent–School Collaboration.](#) This resource is a research project from the University of Washington College of Education designed to expand parent involvement in schools and districts. The project includes a family engagement survey, a parent engagement curriculum, and a set of research briefs on engagement strategies.



## *Collaborate with Community Stakeholders*

Strong school communities create strong learners. To have the most positive impact on students' academic and wellness, schools and communities must work together through a collaborative and comprehensive approach. Community partners can help schools prepare students for college, career, and citizenship by offering opportunities beyond the academic supports students receive in the school.

The school community's purpose is to ensure that each student acquires the knowledge, skills, habits, and attitudes necessary for success in school and in life. Supporting teaching and learning requires addressing students' social service needs, as well as their academic ones, and this broad-based support is essential in closing achievement gaps. The positive effect of connecting community resources with student needs is well documented (*Communities in Schools, 2007*); in fact, community support of the educational process is considered one of the characteristics common to high-performing schools (*Henderson & Mapp, 2002*).

Community partners, businesses, agencies, cultural and civic organizations, and colleges or universities should be able to enhance existing services and contribute to the school improvement plan. Their role is to expand students' access to necessary opportunities and supports and help the school better meet the diverse needs of students, families, and the community. The entire community benefits when community stakeholders join efforts with families to support schools in creating learning experiences that connect students' in-school experience with industry and opportunities in the communities where they live. This is true for students of all ages/grades and backgrounds, across race and ethnicity, regardless of the parents' education, family income, or background (*Jeynes, 2003*). Community stakeholders can be engaged in an intentional and meaningful way to help district and school leaders achieve their goals.

### **Action Steps**

Schools can engage community stakeholders in education through several approaches:

- Hire and train school-community liaisons who know the history, language, and cultural background of the community to contact parents and coordinate activities.
- Invite collaborators from local higher education institutions to school events and assign them specific roles in school meetings and assemblies.
- Develop an outreach strategy to inform families, businesses, and the community about school and family involvement opportunities, policies, and programs.
- Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of family involvement programs and activities.

### **Resources**

[LEAD Tool – Leadership for Equity Assessment and Development Tool](#). The LEAD Tool™ helps school leadership teams start dialogue and sustain action in expanding educational opportunities, improving school climate, and attaining equitable outcomes. It examines practices and policies through the lens of 10 research-based equitable practices, and it gives teams an



opportunity to bring families, communities, and other stakeholders into the conversation.

[A Nation at Hope: Recommendations for Action, Chapter 2](#). This report was developed by the Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development. Chapter 2 provides recommendations for schools, districts, and state education agencies on how to make a systemic commitment to SEL.

[Building Partnerships in Support of Where, When, & How Learning Happens](#). This brief, written by the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development's Youth Development Work Group, outlines strategies based on examples from around the country for how educators can partner with youth development organizations.

[CASEL's District-Level SEL Communication Resources](#). This resource outlines the what, where, when, why, and who of a district communication plan for SEL implementation. The page includes links to communication plan examples from states and districts around the country.

[CASEL Schoolwide SEL Implementation Guide](#). This interactive online resource leads school administrators through a three-stage process (organize, implement, improve) for schoolwide SEL. The guide provides helpful activities, timelines, and resources.

[School and Community Partnership Toolkit](#). This toolkit, from Youth Development Executives of King County (YDEKC), is focused on improving school and community partner engagement, and includes self-assessment rubrics, templates and tools, and tip sheets for a variety of partnership activities.

### *Collaborate with Expanded Learning Opportunity Providers*

ELOs—before-school, during-school, afterschool, and summer learning programs—have a long history of creating safe and supportive environments that support the SEL of young people (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). Since these programs lack the curricular demands of schools, they are often able to focus on developing participants' social emotional skills to a greater extent than schools can. Studies show that access to quality ELOs positively affects a variety of outcomes, including academics, attendance, engagement in learning, behavior, and social emotional development (American Institutes for Research, 2016; Durlak et al., 2010; Lauer et al., 2006; Pierce, Auger, & Vandell, 2013). ELOs with strong partnerships with school teachers and principals are more successful in improving student outcomes around positive behavior, initiative, and homework effort and completion (Miller, 2005). Schools can partner with ELOs to align SEL practices and create opportunities for young people to learn and practice social emotional skills across the whole day.

### **Action Steps**

Systems of communication and relationship building with ELOs are essential to properly coordinate SEL across schools and community partners. To successfully partner with ELOs, schools can do the following:

- Start by engaging community organizations and learn what they are already doing to promote SEL in their programs.
- Consider inviting ELOs to professional learning opportunities or SEL-related meetings.



- Partner with local organizations to link youth to more before-school or afterschool learning opportunities.
- Consider including ELO leaders on the SEL leadership team to help align policy and practices.
- Learn from the expertise available on all sides; ELOs have perspectives and strengths that differ from schools, which can be valuable when developing or implementing SEL supports.

## Resources

[YDEKC School and Community Partnership Toolkit](#). This toolkit is focused on improving school and community partner engagement; it includes self-assessment rubrics, templates and tools, and tip sheets for a variety of partnership activities.

[Every Hour Counts – Expanded Learning & Afterschool Project](#). This toolkit for expanded learning opportunities provides resources to help states and cities develop afterschool networks or systems. The information in the toolkit was gathered from afterschool intermediary organizations; the section on partnerships includes case study videos, reports, data-sharing guidance, and other tools.

[You 4 Youth, Strengthening Partnerships Toolkit](#). This guide on partnerships provides clear implementation strategies, staff coaching tips and trainings, and customizable tools.

[The In-School and Afterschool Social and Emotional Learning Connection: A Planning Tool](#). This tool is designed to support collaborative school and afterschool/ELO SEL planning and goal setting.

[Supporting Social and Emotional Development Through Quality Afterschool Programs](#). This brief provides an overview of work in afterschool and school-based settings to define SEL competencies, shares recent research on how afterschool programs contribute to the development of these competencies, and offers recommendations for both practitioners and researchers.

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**Question:** How has your school created the conditions to support students' SEL, collaborated with families and community members, and built adult capacity?

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## Conclusions

All students deserve high-quality, engaging, and comprehensive instruction that addresses their social emotional and academic needs in a safe and supportive environment. We, as educators



and mentors, hold the responsibility and the opportunity to provide such an environment so that our students reach their full potential. Change won't be quick and won't be easy, but if we do it well, it will be transformational for our schools and our students.

Washington State should integrate SEL in K–12 public schools, in collaboration with families, communities, and other youth-serving agencies. With this Implementation Guide as a starting point, we can ensure that each of our state's 300+ districts and 2,000+ schools initiate or build upon SEL efforts that hold true to our commitment to every child within the state. We hope that you will engage in this process and:

- Hold yourself accountable to the four guiding principles of equity, cultural responsiveness, universal design, and trauma-informed practices.
- Incorporate these principles into your SEL approach at the systemic, institutional, and individual levels, through advanced planning and concrete action.
- Create the systemic conditions that support SEL.
- Engage in collaborative efforts with families and communities.
- Become intentional about building your and your colleagues' capacity to implement SEL.

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## SEL Implementation Guide: Additional Resources List

1. **OSPI SEL Module.** In 2016, the Washington State Legislature directed OSPI to create an SEL learning module. This module currently contains five learning segments: Introduction to SEL, Embedding SEL Schoolwide, Creating a Professional Culture Based on SEL, Integrating SEL Into Culturally Responsive Classrooms, and Identifying & Selecting Evidence-Based SEL Programs.
2. **CASEL Schoolwide SEL Implementation Guide.** This interactive online resource leads school administrators through a three-stage process (organize, implement, improve) for schoolwide SEL. The guide provides helpful activities, timelines, and supportive resources.
3. **Social and Emotional Learning: Where Do You Start.** This curated posting from Education Northwest provides resources (such as the SEL Basics Primer: Understanding and Cultivating Social Emotional Learning) and strategies and professional learning opportunities aligned to the development, support, and measurement of SEL implementation.
4. **CASEL District Resource Center.** This is a comprehensive online resource for district leaders that provides access to foundational research and to research-informed resources from CASEL and districts around the country on districtwide SEL implementation.

## Glossary

**Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)** are traumatic experiences—such as abuse, household dysfunction, or neglect—that occur in a person’s life before the age of 18. The hallmark Kaiser ACE study (1955 to 1997) proved there was an association between ACEs and problems with health/well-being later on in life, demonstrating the urgent need to properly support children who have been affected by ACEs. Since then, numerous studies on ACEs have been conducted (e.g., the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System).

**Benchmark** is a term used to identify specific and measurable skill-building milestones within a social emotional learning (SEL) standard. SEL standards, benchmarks, and indicators form part of the Washington State SEL framework, which articulates social emotional learning and development in practical, tangible ways that can be observed and supported intentionally.

**Codesign** is an approach to design attempting to actively involve all stakeholders in the design process to help ensure the result meets their needs and is usable. The term is used in a variety of fields as a way of creating environments that are more responsive and appropriate to the users' cultural, emotional, social, and practical needs.

**Competency** refers to a wide range of knowledge, skills, and traits applicable to all academic, career, and civic settings, and believed to be necessary for success in today’s world.

**Cultural humility** is about accepting one’s limitations by increasing self-awareness of biases and perceptions and engaging in a life-long self-reflection process about how to put these aside and learn from others.

**Culturally responsive** teaching and learning addresses existing issues of power and privilege and can empower all students in ways that respect and honor their intersecting cultural influences. Culturally responsive approaches draw upon students’ unique strengths and experiences while orienting learning in relation to individuals’ cultural contexts. Delivering a culturally responsive education requires ongoing attention to attitudes, environments, curricula, teaching strategies, and family/community involvement efforts.

**Culture** is a product of relationships among and between individuals and stakeholder groups, a school’s social norms (what is considered acceptable and unacceptable behavior within the school community), and the expectations individuals have for themselves and for others. School culture encompasses issues directly related to equity, such as the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness and welcoming nature of classrooms and public spaces, and the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity.

**Developmentally appropriate** education uses an understanding of child development to design programs or approaches that meet the needs of a particular age group and developmental stage.

**Disproportionate discipline** or discipline disparities is when one demographic group is targeted for disciplinary actions at a greater rate and/or in harsher or more exclusionary ways than students in other demographic groups. Nationally, the Government Accountability Office has reported that black students, boys, and students with disabilities are subjected to

disproportionate discipline in public schools.

**Educators** are people who provide instruction. They can be school day teachers, school staff, afterschool teachers, community partners, or other people who contribute to the educational culture of a school.

**Environmental and instructional conditions for learning** are the varied factors that affect a student's ability to learn, including the school or classroom culture and climate, the curriculum, the instructional approaches used, etc.

**Equity** is achieved in a system in which each child receives what he or she needs to develop to his or her full academic and social potential.

**Essential elements** are the primary approaches to successfully implementing SEL in a school or district. The three essential elements described by the Washington SEL Implementation Guide are: 1) Create conditions to support students' SEL; 2) collaborate with families, communities, and providers of expanded learning opportunities (ELO); and 3) build adult capacity.

**Evidence-based** approaches to education create practical applications informed by findings from the best available research.

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

**Grade band** is a group of grades or ages. In Washington State, there are four grade bands: early elementary (kindergarten through Grade 3), late elementary (Grades 4 and 5), middle school (Grades 6–8), and high school/adult (Grade 9 and beyond).

**Growth mindset** describes a self-perception or "self-theory" where an individual believes they can learn more or become smarter if they work hard and persevere, and that their innate qualities (e.g., intelligence or talent) are just the starting point. This concept was developed by psychologist Carol Dweck. The opposite of a growth mindset is a "fixed mindset," where an individual has the self-perception that their basic qualities are fixed or set. Dweck's research suggests that students with a growth mindset are more likely to take academic risks, be academically resilient, and foster a broader love of learning.

**Guiding principles** are the foundational themes that inform the planning, implementation, review and redesign, and sustainability of the SEL approach in Washington State. The four principles are equity, cultural responsiveness, universal design, and trauma-informed practices.

**Historic oppression** refers to chronic, pervasive, and intergenerational experiences of oppression in our society. The Washington SEL Implementation Guide notes that bias, historic oppression, exposure to trauma, and inequitable access to resources influence students' social emotional skill development and adults' perceptions of students' skills.

**Implicit bias** is defined as the mental process that causes us to have negative feelings about and attitudes toward people based on characteristics like race, ethnicity, age, and appearance. This cognitive process functions in our subconscious mind; people are typically not aware of the

negative biases that develop over the course of a lifetime.

**Inclusive** refers to an intentional approach to creating learning environments and experiences that support all students.

**Indicator** is a measure of growth. In the Washington SEL framework, indicators are the smallest and most precise metric for quantifying growth in social emotional skills.

**Linguistic assets** are part of an asset-based way of thinking about instructional approaches for students who speak English as a second language or are English language learners. This approach recognizes and builds on the student's first language and recognizes that as a strength.

**Modules** are individual professional development offerings. OSPI has developed an SEL online module consisting of five professional development learning segments.

**School administration** refers to the leadership and other non-teaching staff at a school or district.

**School climate** stems from people's experiences of school life and can be thought of as the collective "mood" of the school. Climate can vary based on events and changes in the school environment. It both influences and is influenced by school culture.

**Skills** refers to a wide range of knowledge, skills, and traits applicable to all academic, career, and civic settings, and believed to be necessary for success in today's world.

**Stakeholder** refers to anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students. As part of its efforts to develop the Washington SEL Implementation Guide, Washington State has engaged with stakeholders including families, educators, community-based organizations, and tribal representatives across the state.

**Stereotype threat** refers to the risk of confirming negative stereotypes about an individual's racial, ethnic, gender, or cultural group.

**Toxic stress** is a strong, frequent, and sometimes prolonged activation of the body's stress response system. Without appropriate support, adverse childhood experiences can cause or trigger toxic stress.

**Trauma-informed** approaches to human care build on an awareness of the deep and lasting impact that trauma can have on individuals and communities. In Washington State's approach to SEL, a trauma-informed approach recognizes the unique strengths and challenges of children and youth in light of the adversities they face. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) outline six guiding principles for a trauma-informed approach: safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment voice and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues.

**Universal design for learning (UDL)** refers to a "set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone—not a single, one-size-fits-all solution, but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs."

## Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
<b>ACEs</b>	Adverse Childhood Experiences
<b>AIR</b>	American Institutes for Research
<b>CASEL</b>	Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
<b>CAST</b>	Center for Applied Special Technology
<b>CDI</b>	MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories (CDI)
<b>DCYF</b>	Department of Children, Youth, and Families
<b>ELA</b>	English Language Arts
<b>ELOs</b>	Expanded Learning Opportunities
<b>EOGOAC</b>	Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee
<b>ESSA</b>	Every Student Succeeds Act
<b>GPAs</b>	Grade Point Average
<b>LEAD Tool™</b>	Leadership for Equity Assessment & Development Tool
<b>LEAs</b>	Local Education Agencies
<b>MTSS</b>	Multi-Tiered System of Supports
<b>NCSSLE</b>	National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments
<b>OSPI</b>	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
<b>PACE</b>	Partners Advancing Character Education
<b>PBIS</b>	Positive Behavior Intervention System
<b>PD</b>	Professional Development
<b>PDSA</b>	Plan, Do, Study, Act
<b>REL NW</b>	Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest
<b>SAFE</b>	Sequenced-Active-Focused-Explicit

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>SBI</b> s	Standards, Benchmarks, and Indicators
<b>SEAD</b>	Social Emotional and Academic Development
<b>SEAs</b>	State Education Agencies
<b>SEL</b>	Social Emotional Learning
<b>SELB</b>	Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks (Workgroup)
<b>SELI</b>	Social Emotional Learning Indicators (Workgroup)
<b>TPEP, 5D+</b>	Teacher/Principal Evaluation Program and 5 Dimensions of Learning and Readiness Assessment: Getting Ready for Teacher Evaluation
<b>UDL</b>	Universal Design for Learning
<b>WSSDA</b>	Washington State School Directors' Association
<b>YDEKC</b>	Youth Development Executives of King County

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