

SEL Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

9:00AM–12:00PM

10/23/25

Attendee List

Members

Davida Sharpe
Jay Tyus
Tammy Bolen
Carola Brenes
Jenny Morgan
Emily Santiago
Shelley Barker
Laurie Dils

Members

Ka'ohe Wong
Peggy Carlson
Brandi Moore
Ellie Lovde
Esmeralda Garibay
Maddy Vonhoff
Lauren Macdonald
Nadine Philip
Radu Smintina

OSPI Staff

Heather Rees
Christian Stark
Atela Tinnin

Guests

Sarah Butcher

Introductions

All Members

Members were asked to share their name, organization and why they wanted to serve on the SEL Advisory Committee(SELAC). Some of the responses included:

- I'm here to represent the health connections with SEL, I see the connections between SEL and the whole child.
- I believe SEL is critical in building healthy youth and adults.
- I did my dissertation on SEL and see the benefits of it.
- When school systems leverage the purpose and intent of SEL, greatness happens.
- Learning doesn't happen if we aren't providing for the students SEL needs.
- As a school counselor it's a huge part of her job and being able to see the positive impact when providing strong SEL curriculum when looking at discipline and behavior issues.
- SEL is the heart of school counselors, it's what we do and what we believe.
- SEL is most powerful when its culturally responsive, trauma informed and available to every learner.
- SEL is the core of helping students succeed.
- SEL can be a protective factor in the realm of substance abuse.



Meeting Objectives

1. Learn the purpose and tasks of the committee;
2. Learn about tips on writing recommendations;
3. Review SEL framework;
4. Discuss co-chair process;
5. Learn about school climate surveys;
6. Discuss and brainstorm a topic for the year; and
7. Wrap up with next steps and feedback survey.

Purpose and Tasks of the SEL Advisory Committee

Tammy Bolen

[RCW 28A.300.477](#)

- The RCW directs OSPI to convene, staff, and appoint members to the Social Emotional Learning Committee to expand and promote SEL.
- Many of the tasks in the RCW have been completed over the last five years of work. There are ongoing tasks of the committee and they are to:
 - Align the SEL standards and benchmarks with other relevant standards and guidelines;
 - Identify best practices or guidance for schools implementing the standards, benchmarks, and developmental indicators for social emotional learning;
 - Engage with stakeholders and seek feedback; and
 - Identify strategies to improve coordination between early learning, K–12 education, youth-serving community partners, and culturally based providers, and higher education regarding SEL.

Legislative Report and Recommendation Tips

Tammy Bolen and Heather Rees

- The Committee advises the Legislature via the annual legislative report due to OSPI on May 1st, which must include:
 - Accomplishments;
 - State of implementation;
 - Systemic barriers; and
 - Recommendations.
- The Committee Advises by providing feedback on:
 - SEL standards alignment;
 - Guidance; and



- Resources.
- Tips: Recommendation should:
 - Be clear and straight forward;
 - Include more recommendations as opposed to fewer recommendations that have multiple steps;
 - Identify who the recommendation is for and should be within OSPI scope of authority and the committee authority which is SEL in education; and
 - The recommendation should be actionable in implementation and targeted and specific.

SEL Framework

Tammy Bolen

[The OSPI SEL Webpage](#)

- SEL defined: 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.
- The framework was developed through an extensive collaborative effort led by the Washington SEL workgroups. The SEL framework includes:
 - The six Washington SEL standards and benchmarks that were adopted by OSPI in 2020. When talking about “standards,” I am referring to Washington SEL standards, and not the CASEL competencies which are slightly different; and
 - The SEL standards’ indicators.
- The framework commits to four Guiding Principles:
 - Equity: Ensure each child receives what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential.
 - Cultural Responsiveness: Draw upon students’ unique strengths and experiences while orienting learning in relation to individuals’ cultural context.
 - Universal Design: Provide a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people by removing barriers in the curriculum.
 - Trauma-Informed Practices: Recognize the unique strengths and challenges of children and youth in light of the adversities they face.
- The three essential elements are:
 - Creating conditions to support SEL: This begins with creating a positive school climate and culture and reviewing and adjusting policies and practices that may inhibit SEL.
 - Working in collaboration: SEL must have community involvement from the



- onset. Planning through implementation needs to include families, students, educators and those connected to students' education.
- Building adult capacity by providing learning opportunities for educators that help identify and counter bias and build adult social emotional skills.

Meeting Structure and Co-Chair Discussion

Tammy Bolen

Member Intake Form

All members should have completed the Member Intake Form. If you have not already done so, please complete that at your earliest convenience.

There are four SELAC meetings throughout the year.

Meeting Flow:

- # 1: Orientation/topic choice
 - # 2: Learning about topic
 - # 3: Learning about topic
 - # 4: Finalize and prioritize recommendations
- Joint EGOAC meeting—TBD

The hope is that with only four meetings and the EGOAC meeting, you can attend all of the meetings. This also gives you time to go back to the organization you represent and discuss the topics and drafted recommendations and bring that information back to the committee. This is one way to ensure that we get stakeholder feedback.

Meeting Process:

- Summarize and go over follow-up/action items from previous meeting;
- Learn about a topic;
- Identify the barriers; and
- Draft recommendation(s).

Discussion/Questions

Question: I'm curious, is the hope that EGOAC meeting happens before Legislative session?

Answer (Heather Rees): The EGOAC is on a different cycle than SELAC and they're working on their own recommendations which will take them through to January. It is very difficult for them to meeting during legislative session, so we will likely meet right after the legislative session in the spring.

Co-Chair Discussion

Co-chairs responsibilities:

- Assisting in agenda item creation
- Attend planning calls with OSPI. This is crucial.
 - EOGOAC Meeting—requires a little more planning and participation from the members.
- Assist in reviewing recommendations:
 - Editing, and finalizing before bringing to the committee.

We currently have three members interested in being Co-chair.

They will provide a paragraph on why they want to serve as Co-chair. This will be sent out to all the members, and we will vote on two Co-chairs in our December SELAC meeting.

In the interim, we are inviting all three of the interested members to attend the planning meeting. We will send out a poll to arrange a time.

School Climate Recommendation & Presentation

Tammy Bolen

[2025 SELAC Recommendations](#)

The link above will take you to the 2024–2025 SELAC Recommendations. For the purpose of this meeting, please read recommendation #3. Please familiarize yourself with the other recommendations after the meeting.

Recommendation #3:

Direct OSPI to collaborate with the State Board of Education (SBE) to update the Washington School Improvement Framework (WSIF) in the next round (Cycle 4) of the school improvement identification process to include one additional measure focused on school climate.

Question: Why did you choose this recommendation to review.

Answer: Selected this because we didn't want to lose the critical work time of this meeting and knew we members were passionate about this topic.

The idea is that we do some learning on a topic that helps inform any recommendations we may want to write.

Assessing School Climate

- The Washington State Board of Education (SBE) whitepaper on [Assessing School Climate](#) is the main resource I will be presenting on. The goal is to understand



what school climate is, the benefits and challenges, why it matters and review evidence and talk through the recommendation and next steps.

- Many states, including Washington, have explored school climate as an indicator of school quality.
- SBE sought to understand whether school climate could be measured reliably and fairly.
- This discussion builds from both state and national research on school climate and SEL.
- In 2023, the SBE published a white paper after identifying school climate as a gap in state measurement systems. Academic-focused metrics were not capturing conditions for learning or student experiences.
- Goal and Objectives: Explore research-based approaches, identify best practices, and guide potential integration into statewide improvement frameworks
 - Review national and local evidence-based practices
 - Identify validated survey instruments and best practices
 - Provide recommendations for integrating school climate into state frameworks
 - The report emphasizes equity, student voice, and cultural responsiveness.

School climate represents the conditions for learning, not just academic outcomes.

- Four core domains:
 - **Safety:** Physical, emotional, and identity safety for all students and staff
 - **Relationships:** Belonging, respect, and positive connections among students and adults
 - **Teaching & Learning:** Engagement, high expectations, and supportive instruction
 - **Institutional Environment:** Organization, inclusivity, resources, and overall school culture
- Positive school climate is linked to better academic performance, attendance, engagement, and social-emotional outcomes, better teacher satisfaction and retention. Unlike test scores, climate measures capture how students experience school day-to-day.

Discussion Question

What experiences or observations tell you a school has a strong climate?

Member responses:

- The school becomes the heart and center of the community when there's a positive climate. People want to come to work, people want to go to school, want



to learn, want to participate, want to do things outside of the school that are connected with the school. It becomes the real center of the community.

- Recalling a personal story where her daughter called her teacher mom and the child was apologizing, and the mother was happy that her daughter had the relationship with the teacher to feel safe enough to do that. It shows she has someone to talk to at school to help buffer them before they talk to parents and that's community. That's what community is about.
- Out of school time providers add to positive school climate. It really shows up. When there are like people reflected in community and when programs show the mentality of the schools we're serving, positive school climate is reinforced.
- My husband works at a very diverse, low-income middle school. The school was very intentional about hiring teachers who reflect the student population, and they are intentional about making the books and posters and materials that are available or visible in the hallways reflect the students. He feels the climate is very positive because of that.
- Strong schools equal the Emotional Intelligence of teachers and staff.

School Climate and SEL

- SEL supports and is supported by school climate. Students' social emotional skills develop most effectively in safe, supportive, and inclusive school environments.
- Positive school climate creates stronger SEL outcomes.
- Survey Data can guide SEL improvements.

Why measure school climate?

- School climate surveys help identify areas where students feel unsafe, disconnected, or unsupported.
- Data can guide targeted interventions and professional learning for staff.
- Disaggregated data reveal inequities across student groups, helping schools address systemic barriers. highlights gaps in belonging or safety.
- Helps SEL implementation by linking perception data to SEL outcomes.
- Surveys help track progress over time, providing a feedback loop for continuous improvement.
- Engaging students, families, and staff in surveys promotes trust and transparency.

Method used to develop SBE school climate white paper

- Literature Review & State Scan:
Ensured recommendations were evidence-based and informed by national best practices.
Identified validated survey instruments and domains relevant for Washington.



- **Superintendent Survey:**
Anonymous survey sent to all district superintendents in Washington.
Captured existing climate measurement practices, challenges, and resource needs.
Provided real-world context for statewide recommendations.
- **Stakeholder Interviews:**
Conducted with administrators, educators, and other key stakeholders.
Explored barriers to implementing a statewide survey and gathered input on equity and practical considerations.
- **Outcome:**
Methods ensured recommendations are research-informed, equity-focused, and practically implementable.

Stakeholder Findings

- Stakeholders agreed that understanding climate is important to improvement and equity.
- Many cautioned that accountability use could create pressure or bias.
- There was strong consensus that any state survey should be culturally responsive and inclusive of diverse perspectives.

Challenges in Implementing School Climate Surveys

- **Lack of validated tools:** Many existing surveys are not rigorously tested or culturally responsive, reducing reliability and comparability.
- **Limited stakeholder engagement:** Students, staff, and families may be underrepresented in surveys, which can skew results.
- **Fragmented improvement efforts:** Survey results alone do not drive improvement unless paired with coherent action plans.
- **Equity and participation:** Certain student groups may respond at lower rates, which can bias the data.
- **Data interpretation:** Staff need training and time to analyze results effectively.
- **Risk of misuse:** If tied to high-stakes accountability, schools might manipulate responses or focus on surface-level compliance.
- Additionally, there is also survey fatigue that impacts participation and results.

SBE White Paper Findings: Accountability Use

- No evidence that high-stakes use improves school climate
- Risks of manipulation and inequitable outcomes
- Recommend use for school improvement, not accountability

White Paper Recommendations

- It is important that the state make resources available that can address any deficits identified by the school climate survey, making it clear that the survey results are actionable.
- In order for a statewide school climate survey to be administered widely,



Washington should consider requiring or incentivizing districts to participate.

- We recommend developing a core survey and exploring options for enhancing a statewide effort by offering additional optional survey components.

Broader Research Consensus

- RAND, AIR, and WestEd: limited reliability for high-stakes use
- Surveys most effective as reflection and planning tools
- Data should build trust, not fear of reprisal

Reflection Questions:

- What is the purpose of making the school climate survey and accountability measure?
- How might we balance accountability with authentic improvement?
- What would success look like if schools used the climate data formatively?
- What risks or unintended effects might occur with accountability use?

Discussion

How do you think climate data complements other data used in schools and districts?

- Attendance—kids aren't going to come if they don't feel welcome, families aren't going to send the kids if they aren't safe.
- Special education—making sure we are closing that gap on discipline.
- Tool to better understand the healthy youth survey.
- Kids are more willing to participate in the learning when there is a healthy school climate.
- Graduation rates and keeping kids in schools and connected at the high school level leads to them continuing school—they won't if they aren't feeling supported or included.
- Accountability is a verb! The ability to joyfully account for things!

Members went into break-out rooms to discuss this and other topics for future meetings.

Discussion/Questions after the break-out room:

- Regarding the big, beautiful bill—I have been asked a lot about what this implies for the future for their child at school.
 - We need to frame this around SEL—thinking about after school programs, such as TRIO and Champs programs being defunded, SEL programs such as After School—Parents are raising these issues often.



- What can the SEL committee impact on these areas? What is our authority? It is limited and education focused.
- Do we need additional learning around the recommendation?

Public Comment

[Public Comment Submission Link](#)

No public comment was given.

Reminders and Next Steps

Tammy Bolen

- Fill out the [Member Intake Form](#). This form provides us with crucial information to pay for substitutes or travel costs if we decide to have any in-person meetings. If you have not already completed the intake form, please do so at your earliest convenience.
- Next meeting we hope to have a facilitator, so that Tammy, as a member, can participate in the conversation and not just facilitate.
- Between now and next meeting, we will send out paragraphs from the potential co-chairs.
- Next meeting is December 4, 2025, 9:00AM–12:00PM.
 - We will post on the [OSPI SEL Advisory webpage](#) and send out the agenda for the next meeting a week before the meeting. The same link will be used for every meeting except the EOGOAC and SELAC joint meeting.

OSPI provided members who attended the link to a meeting feedback survey.