



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Social Emotional Learning Legislative Report

2025

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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Washington Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Committee (referred to in this report as “the Committee” and “Committee”) was established in 2019 through Senate Bill 5082 (SB 5082) to address the growing body of evidence that shows the need for improving a student’s social and emotional competencies which are critical to every child’s development and learning. SB 5082—codified in Revised Code of Washington (RCW) [28A.300.477](#) — requires the Committee to submit a progress report to the legislature annually beginning June 1, 2021. The progress report must include accomplishments, state-level data regarding implementation of SEL, and the identification of systemic barriers and recommendations for policy changes necessary to promote and expand SEL.

The Committee met throughout the 2024–25 school year to discuss topics that impact SEL in Washington. Committee meeting topics included but were not limited to discussion on the current state of SEL in Washington; the impact of SEL on students, families, communities, and educators; SEL in higher education; SEL assessment and implementation data; school climate; the need for SEL funding; adult SEL capacity building; and culturally sustaining practices. Additionally, the committee met with the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) as required, to discuss culturally responsive SEL, and a holistic approach toward closing the opportunity gap, specifically for students of color.

The Committee is prioritizing this SEL recommendation for legislative action:

1. Designate social emotional learning to be an explicit component of a fully implemented Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS). Provide dedicated basic education funding to support systemic implementation of social emotional learning through direct instruction, professional learning, capacity building, and efforts to improve school climate. This can be done by doing the following:
 - a. Integrating regional MTSS capacity building with professional development (PD) on adult capacity around SEL.
 - b. Including SEL in statewide implementation and progress monitoring of MTSS.
 - c. Offering additional full-time employee (FTE) to include school-based supports for educators including family engagement specialists, classified

staff providing student and staff safety, or assistant principals to work on SEL school culture.

- d. Mandating an additional professional development day every year on SEL with a focus on building adult capacity for SEL.
- e. Providing additional grants to school districts to support professional development on the direct instruction of SEL, professional learning and capacity building for educators, and collaborative efforts to measure and improve school climate.

Additional recommendations of the Committee are:

- 2. Increase funding to strengthen state level infrastructure support for SEL implementation to support the increased workload to champion the crucial SEL work identified by the committee. Funding is needed to:
 - a. Develop materials for educators on how the SEL standards, benchmarks, and indicators are present in diverse cultures and how to engage students in a culturally responsive way.
 - b. Develop and disseminate tools and guidance to school districts on effective partnerships with local tribes on social emotional learning implementation.
 - c. Support research, data analysis, and statewide collaboration and develop one site where information from other state agencies and reports may be housed. Highlight interconnected recommendations from various groups/agencies.
- 3. Direct OSPI to collaborate with the State Board of Education to update the Washington School Improvement Framework (WISF) in the next round (Cycle 4) of the school improvement identification process to include one additional measure focused on school climate.
- 4. Amend RCW 28A.300.477 to expand the membership of the Committee to include a representative of the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), and a representative working in early learning from the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).
- 5. Provide funding to develop and conduct a social emotional learning needs assessment.

- a. Provide funding to PESB to conduct a needs assessment to identify SEL capacity, understanding of bias, equity, culturally sustaining, trauma-informed and universally designed practices, and SEL implementation process for faculty and candidates participating in an education preparation program.
- b. Provide funding to OSPI to conduct a needs assessment to systematically review and evaluate policies and procedures, culturally sustaining practices, fidelity of SEL implementation utilizing the Washington SEL standards, and barriers to SEL implementation in schools.

For each recommendation, the Committee offers relevant context and rationale to inform decision-making. Many recommendations carry over from previous year's report recommendations as these have not yet been acted upon. In addition, these recommendations are aligned to those shared in the [2024–25 Education Opportunity Gap Oversight Accountability Committee \(EOGOAC\) Legislative report](#).

INTRODUCTION

Social Emotional Learning Matters

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is a foundational component of student success, equipping learners with critical skills such as emotional regulation, empathy, goal-setting, and responsible decision-making. A comprehensive meta-analysis encompassing over 270,000 K–12 students found that participants in SEL programs demonstrated an average 11 percentile-point gain in academic achievement compared to their peers (Durlak, 2017). These programs also led to measurable improvements in social behavior and reductions in emotional distress. In Washington state, OSPI has developed a statewide SEL framework centered on equity, cultural responsiveness, and trauma-informed practices, ensuring alignment with the state’s commitment to whole-child education.

Beyond academic gains, SEL contributes to long-term positive outcomes. Studies show that students who develop strong social-emotional skills are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and experience success in the workforce. Schools that implement SEL with fidelity also report fewer disciplinary referrals and improved school climate, which benefits both students and educators. By supporting SEL implementation, Washington state is investing in both the immediate and lifelong well-being of its students, while fostering a more inclusive, equitable, and future-ready education system.

SEL is well researched and supported widely by educators, families, and statewide stakeholders, in addition to the [national coalition of education organizations and associations](#). Prioritizing SEL as a critical component of supportive learning environments, schools can enhance academic achievement and prepare students for the complexities of the modern world. The benefits of SEL are clear:

- **Greater resilience:** Building resilience through SEL helps students manage stress, cope with failure, and maintain motivation. Students are more equipped to handle challenges and setbacks.¹
- **Enhanced emotional regulation:** Research indicates that effective emotional regulation strategies, such as mindfulness and cognitive reappraisal, lead to

¹ *Developing Resilience: Overcoming Academic Challenges and Excelling*. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Retrieved from: <https://casel.org>

improved well-being, better interpersonal relationships, and enhanced resilience in the face of stress and adversity.²

- **Stronger relationships:** SEL has been shown to improve students' social awareness, fostering positive interactions and relationships with peers and adults. Students who have at least one trusted adult are better situated to seek help for themselves and others.³
- **Increased empathy:** Studies highlight that empathy is a powerful predictor of prosocial behaviors, such as forgiveness, volunteering, and helping others. Empathy reduces aggression and bullying among students.⁴
- **Better decision-making:** Research shows that individuals who engage in self-reflection activities make more balanced and confident decisions. These practices help in breaking down complex decisions and reducing biases.
- **Improved academic performance:** SEL programs have been linked to higher academic achievement, with students showing improved test scores, grades, and academic motivation.⁵
- **Reduced behavior issues:** SEL is effective in reducing problem behaviors, emotional distress, and disciplinary issues. This promotes a safe and more supportive environment for teachers and students schoolwide.

² *Emotional Regulation*. National Institutes of Health – National Library of Medicine. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3654245/>

³ *SEL for Students: Social Awareness and Relationship Skills*. Greater Good in Education, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from: <https://ggie.berkeley.edu/student-well-being/sel-for-students-social-awareness-and-relationship-skills>

⁴ *Cultivating Empathy*. Harvard Graduate School of Education – Making Caring Common Project. Retrieved from: <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-families/cultivating-empathy>

⁵ *10 Effective Strategies to Improve Students' Performance*. Edutopia. Retrieved from: <https://www.edutopia.org/article/10-effective-strategies-improve-student-performance>

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Social Emotional Learning Framework

The Washington state SEL standards and benchmarks along with the guiding principles provide a foundation and system for effective SEL implementation. This framework, found in Appendix A, identifies key SEL skills and defines SEL as 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 life. ([Washington State SEL Implementation Guide, 2019](#)). The Washington state SEL standards and benchmarks were developed by a team comprised of practitioners and other experts who work with youth and families in educational settings, and with knowledge of topics related to SEL.

Social Emotional Learning Committee Ongoing Tasks

In addition to writing an annual progress report that includes accomplishments, identifying systemic barriers, needed policy changes, and recommendations, the legislature tasked the Committee with the following ongoing tasks:

1. Identify professional development opportunities for teachers and educational staff and review and update the SEL Online Modules.
2. Provide guidance on best practices and strategies to implement the SEL standards, benchmarks and developmental indicators.
3. Identify strategies to improve coordination between early learning, K–12 education, youth-serving community partners, and culturally based providers, and higher education regarding SEL.
4. Consider systems for collecting data on SEL and monitoring implementation.
5. Engage with interest holders and seek feedback.

UPDATE STATUS- ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Committee Work Accomplishments

During the 2024–25 year, the Committee has focused on the promotion and expansion of SEL in the state and engagement with stakeholders to seek feedback, specifically around the experiences of SEL for families and students in schools. Starting with the committee meetings, we promoted SEL strategies through intentional modeling to build a community of SEL practitioners in Washington state. We introduced the three signature practices of SEL (<https://signaturepractices.casel.org/>) into each monthly session by demonstrating an inclusive welcome, engaging strategies, and an intentional close.

The Committee membership includes representation from state agencies, non-profits, and key collaborators across the state. Nearly all members serve as volunteers, and many were new to the committee this year. Therefore, in August and September the Committee revised our charter and created community norms for engagement. The Committee shared the “SELAC story” to provide historical context for the work. This work is situated in the context of culturally responsive, trauma informed practice and universal design. Through the lens of culturally responsive practice, we reviewed the SEL Standards, Benchmarks and Indicators (SBI) as well as the SEL Implementation Guide. In October we continued this work in a joint session with the EOGOAC focused on how these committees can work together to better meet the needs of students of color. The Committee is grateful to the EOGOAC for their feedback and suggestions for how to advance the partnership. The November meeting offered opportunities to update the Committee on OSPI work in Mental Health Literacy and received a report from The Committee for Children. In February, the Committee received a summary of the 2024–25 EOGOAC legislative report, and on the Comprehensive School Counseling Program, and the Committee worked on the recommendations within this report. Given the shared goals, the Committee has aligned recommendations with those offered by the EOGOAC. After the joint session in October and an examination of key OSPI SEL guidance (SBI and Guide), the committee determined that revision of these documents is needed. SEL is vital to creating equitable schooling spaces where all students are prepared for success in academics and beyond. Promoting and expanding SEL will require on-going efforts to continually improve SEL guidance documents for state implementation.

One of the key objectives of this academic year for the committee was to better understand the experience of students and families with SEL. In the January session, the Committee hosted a panel of parents and a separate panel of students to learn more about how SEL has been integrated into their experiences at school. In addition, the Parent Teacher Association disseminated a survey to families soliciting their experiences. Key takeaways from the panels and survey indicated that both families and students knew about SEL, and how their schools had integrated SEL content. However, implementation of SEL differed and was sometimes confused with other school-wide efforts. Both families and students indicated that SEL was important for student success, especially for mental health, but that implementation could be more robust and targeted. Based on the learning from families and students, and the work of the Family and Community Engagement subcommittee, evaluation of SEL skills (Assessment subcommittee) and fidelity around implementation (Implementation subcommittee and Educator Preparation subcommittee) this continues to be a significant area of focus for the Social Emotional Advisory Committee (SELAC).

Subcommittee Work Accomplishments

The Committee prioritized work around four areas of need that align with the tasks the legislature has mandated, listed in the previous section. The Committee created four working subcommittees, many of which meet monthly.

The work was focused on the following:

- Student SEL Assessment.
- SEL in Educator Preparation Programs.
- Family & Community Engagement.
- SEL Implementation Data.

Student SEL Assessment Subcommittee

The goal of the Student SEL Assessment Subcommittee is to establish a guiding framework that districts across Washington state can use to develop and implement equitable approaches for assessing students' SEL skills and understanding.

This subcommittee is developing an accessible and developmentally appropriate framework to guide districts in the equitable assessment of SEL. This framework is grounded in constituent input and designed to produce clear, actionable data. This framework will inform and strengthen SEL systems and practices by supporting policies

that foster student well-being, academic success, and community resilience in partnership with educators, families, students, and community leaders.

The subcommittee recognized that there are multiple approaches to assessing student skills and development of SEL. However, they also acknowledge the potential harm assessments can cause. This is particularly true when students are evaluated on skills, they may not yet have had the opportunity to learn or practice. It is essential that any assessment approach to SEL is developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and used to inform support, not penalize students for unmet needs. The SEL standards, benchmarks, and indicators were never meant to be used for summative assessment or to provide a “grade” or “score” in SEL skills. Therefore, SEL assessment should not be included on report cards, though formative feedback on SEL learning goals might be appropriate. This subcommittee recognizes that a student’s SEL skills are impacted by sociocultural norms, human development, and by the context in which they are taught. SEL assessments should therefore be used to assess gaps in each district’s SEL program, rather than using it as a performance indicator of students’ knowledge and understanding.

The subcommittee engaged in deep discussions around whether assessing adult knowledge and capacity around SEL should take precedence before evaluating student SEL. These conversations led to thoughtful and ongoing debates about the most equitable and developmentally appropriate ways to approach student SEL assessment. Ultimately, the subcommittee agreed that providing a guiding framework would best support districts in developing fair, accurate, and context-sensitive assessment practices. Ensuring students are not penalized for lacking exposure to specific skills and standards or for cultural differences between home and school cultures is primary to culturally responsive SEL that address the needs of all students but, most specifically, students of color.

The subcommittee is currently finalizing the SEL framework and plans to invite input from the EOGOAC, parents, community members, and SELAC to ensure it is inclusive, effective, and reflective of diverse perspectives.

Educator Preparation Programs Subcommittee

The Educator Preparation Programs (EPP) Subcommittee had a key goal to support educator preparation programs in implementing SEL standards and to help prepare educator candidates to teach and support their students in their SEL. This year, the subcommittee focused on building adult capacity (one of the essential elements of

implementation according to the Washington State Social Emotional Learning Implementation Guide and the intersection between SEL and cultural responsiveness.

This subcommittee also worked on accomplishing this goal by establishing the Social Emotional Learning Educator Preparation Programs (SELEPP) Collaborative, a professional learning community of preparation program representatives and other SEL champions. The subcommittee put on “book tastings” events to engage with educator preparation programs and share SEL best practices with the field.

Another goal of the subcommittee is to create educator SEL standards. This year, the subcommittee began laying the groundwork to develop educator SEL standards. While Washington state has established student SEL learning standards, educator SEL standards have yet to be developed. Preparation programs use student standards rather than educator standards to train their candidates. While the student standards outline what students should know, they do not outline how educators expand their own social emotional capacity and incorporate SEL into their practice. The subcommittee met with PESB leadership to begin planning for the development of adult standards.

This year, the subcommittee work focused externally rather than internally. The subcommittee explored the relationship between SEL and racial justice through the SEL EPP book study sessions.

One challenge the subcommittee faced in doing this work was the difficulty in spreading the word about offerings to EPP program faculty, specifically those who teach candidates directly. Another challenge that the committee is working to address is connecting with the broader SEL community outside of Washington. In doing this work, the subcommittee members appreciate the opportunity to reflect on the values and commitments of SEL.

Family and Community Engagement Subcommittee

At the beginning of the year, the Family and Community Engagement subcommittee established several key goals aimed at enhancing understanding of what families and caregivers need to engage as meaningful partners in the implementation of the WA SEL Framework and better support SEL with their students.

The primary objectives were to:

- Hear from diverse families, caregivers, and students.

- Partner with the WA State Family Engagement Center to build a shared understanding of the WA State SEL Framework and resources and to codevelop recommended actions to improve SEL implementation and impact.
- Examine resources available to school districts to support building equitable partnerships with families to strengthen SEL practice.

The subcommittee aimed to model in its work what they want to see in the system; namely, a supportive environment that promotes meaningful partnership and collaboration among partners to ensure that all families have the necessary tools and knowledge to support their children's academic, social, and emotional growth. The subcommittee leveraged a partnership with the WA State Family Engagement Center Parent Advisory Board to allow for meaningful work in this subcommittee to take place absent dedicated funding through the SELAC budget. In addition, the SELAC strengthened its connections to family and student voice by hosting a panel presentation and discussion for the full SEL Advisory Committee.

Throughout this work, the subcommittee gained valuable insight and knowledge, particularly in areas such as effective communication, stakeholder engagement, and the need to strengthen school district and statewide SEL implementation with family and community partners.

SEL Implementation Data Subcommittee

The SEL Implementation Data subcommittee has the goal of understanding how SEL is being implemented, what it looks like, and the impact it has on both students and adults. Working toward this goal, this subcommittee is developing an SEL Implementation Rubric for districts to complete a self-assessment of the adult practices that make up SEL Implementation. These include creating equitable and culturally sustaining policies and procedures that support SEL, building adult capacity to implement SEL, ensuring that SEL is determined by students and community. This subcommittee is intentionally aligning this rubric with the developed Washington state SEL Framework essential elements and guiding principles. These include:

- Grounding SEL in equity, cultural responsiveness, universal design, and trauma-informed practices.
- Strengthening adult SEL capacity within schools.
- Creating supportive conditions for student SEL development.
- Fostering meaningful collaboration with families and communities.

A challenge this subcommittee continues to wrestle with is the limited access to data available on SEL implementation. The available data is sporadic and incomplete. There are no requirements for the districts to supply SEL implementation data and no funding to incentivize creating a method to gather, report, and collect this data. For this reason, the subcommittee shifted gears to developing the SEL Implementation District Self-Assessment. Even if the district is not reporting on the data, this rubric will identify areas of strengths and areas and focused improvement in the SEL implementation. Once the self-assessment is complete, resources to bolster areas of need will be automatically provided.

The subcommittee believes that by providing a district SEL implementation assessment, districts will be able to better identify SEL challenges and address them. Some of the challenges may be:

- Inconsistent SEL implementation.
- Confusion around integrating culturally sustaining SEL practices .
- Gaps in adult SEL training and capacity building.
- The need to develop stronger partnerships with families and local communities to support SEL.

To ensure that subcommittee members represented different perspectives and included educators and educational staff from around the state, announcements were run in OSPI newsletters to seek volunteers to participate in the subcommittee work. The subcommittee will gather input from educators, families and community members to help ensure the rubric is practical and inclusive.

Including SEL in Content Learning Standard Updates

OSPI is refining, prioritizing, and clarifying the existing content learning standards to include wrap-around guidance for SEL, culturally sustaining and inclusionary practices (along with other areas). SEL alignment and examples, resources for parents and community members, and tools will be part of a newly developed Standards Implementation Guide and unpacking documents.

OSPI coordinators, leading the work to update learning standards have collaborated with the OSPI SEL team on integrating SEL into the updated learning standards and guidance. The coordinators presented to the Committee and provided the opportunity for the Committee to share suggestions and comments on the resources that will be going out to families and caregivers.

SEL IMPLEMENTATION DATA

Provision of Social Emotional Learning Instruction

Students in kindergarten through grade three are required to receive instruction in social emotional learning. Washington's SEL Standards and Benchmarks are designed to provide comprehensive instruction over time that support students to learn both concepts and skills. Tables 1 and 2 show how many districts provided SEL instruction in grades K–3 and the total number of hours of instruction provided. The hours of instruction provided is one possible indicator of how comprehensive instruction is.

Table 1: Percent of districts that provided SEL by grade level

Year	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
2022–2023	91%	92%	92%	91%
2023–2024	95%	94%	94%	94%

Source: OSPI CSHE Reporting Survey, extracted 3/8/2024 (2022–23) and 10/1/2024 (2023–24)

Table 2: Percent of districts that provided 10 or more hours of SEL instruction by grade level

Year	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
2022–2023	70%	69%	70%	70%
2023–2024	68%	67%	68%	68%

Source: OSPI CSHE Reporting Survey, extracted 3/8/2024 (2022–23) and 10/1/2024 (2023–24)

All districts are required to report to OSPI on the instructional materials they use to teach social emotional learning for grades K–3 per [RCW 28A.300.475](#). The results of the reporting survey as of March 8, 2024 for 2022–23 and October 1, 2024 for 2023–24. These counts are an average of the number of districts reporting use of the curricula.

2022–2023

Curricula	Number of District Reporting Use
Second Step*	154
Character Strong	55
Ruler*	8
MindUP	8
Sanford Harmony	7
District/School Designed	7

Caring School Community	6
PATHS*	3
Positive Action	3
Responsive Classroom*	2
Zones of Regulation	2
Empowering Education	2
Other**	10

2023–2024

Curricula	Number of District Reporting Use
Second Step*	156
Character Strong	58
Purposeful People	19
Ruler	8
Caring School	7
MindUP*	7
Sanford Harmony	6
Zones of Regulation	5
PATHS*	4
3Rs	3
Positive Discipline	3
Responsive Classroom*	3
Other**	10

*Included in the survey as an option and reported by grade level.

**Includes AIM, Changemakers, Character Pillars, Choose Love, Cloud9World, Crisis Connections, Empowering Education, Enriched Learning, Friendly, GoNoodle, Growing Early Mindsets, Health Smart, Healthy Habits, iReady, Kelso's Choice, Kimochis, Leader in Me, Move This World, Native Game, Positive Action, Pyramid Model, Random Acts of Kindness, Rethink Ed, Slumberkins, and SuperNoodle.

The information gathered from this survey is limited by the parameters and purpose of the survey. The purpose was to collect data from school districts on the following:

- Whether they were teaching SEL and at what grade-levels.
- Identifying SEL curricula used.
- Identifying the number of hours spent on SEL.

This data does not address the fidelity of SEL implementation, but rather compliance in teaching SEL in grades K–3.

SEL Professional Learning Data

Online learning opportunities were developed for teachers and educational staff to build adult capacity, expand knowledge, and promote the integration of SEL. The SEL Online Module was given a minor update over the last year. The segments are intended for educators to apply key learnings, such as culturally sustaining practices, trauma-informed practices, and equity to their implementation of SEL.

Additionally, the Academic Learning is Social and Emotional Module was developed and is also offered to educators. Both modules are loaded with resources and educators may receive clock hours free of charge for completing the segments.

A diverse population of teachers, support staff, administrators, and community members are engaging in this learning which would indicate an interest in implementing and improving SEL.

SEL Online Module Data – 2024

Job Title of Participant	Number
Teacher/Educator	4223
Paraeducator, Teaching Assistant	1409
Behavior/Intervention	95
Administrative Staff (AP, Principals, Deans)	210
Substitutes	84
School Counselors/Psychologists	428
Liaisons, Advocates	72
Nurse/Medical Specialists	200
Community Members	122
Total Number of Participants	6721
Organization Participation	Number
School Districts	194
Educational Service Districts	7
Tribal Members	30

OSPI	8
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Academic Learning is Social and Emotional Module Data – 2024

Job Title of Participant	Total number
Teacher/Educator	432
Paraeducator, Teaching Assistant	192
Behavior/Intervention	6
Administrative Staff (AP, Principals, Deans)	17
Substitutes	17
School Counselors/Psychologists	45
Liaisons, Advocates	8
Nurse/Medical Specialists	12
Community Members	27
Total Number of Participants	729
Organization Participation	Total number
School Districts	167
Educational Service Districts	6
Tribal Members	1

SYSTEMIC BARRIERS

The SEL Recommendations were created to address the following systemic barriers identified by the Committee:

1. Insufficient dedicated resources for SEL.

The lack of dedicated resources limits the ability of school districts to provide comprehensive support, impacting student outcomes and contributing to systemic inequities in education. Not providing dedicated resources to school districts is a systemic barrier for the following reasons:

- **Inequitable Access:** Without dedicated resources, some districts—particularly those in underfunded areas—struggle to implement effective programs. This exacerbates existing disparities in education quality and support for students.
- **Inconsistent Implementation:** Schools may lack the necessary staff, training, and materials to properly implement programs like SEL. This inconsistency can lead to ineffective practices and varied outcomes among students.
- **Limited Capacity for Collaboration:** Dedicated resources allow for collaboration with external agencies (like health departments and social services). Without these resources, districts may not have the capacity to engage in meaningful partnerships that support holistic student development.
- **Sustainability Challenges:** Without consistent funding and resources, initiatives may be short-lived, undermining long-term efforts to foster student well-being and success.
- **Professional Development Gaps:** Ongoing training and resources to support educators are essential. Workforce sustainability is dependent on equipping teachers with ongoing professional learning to effectively teach SEL.

2. De-silo efforts across agencies to ensure consistent, effective SEL implementation.

While the law identifies required members from several agencies to serve on the Committee to help alleviate this challenge of doing this work in a silo, without language that specifically identifies the Committee to advise on SEL in these agencies, the impact and collaboration is limited. Having this change advocates for a holistic and coordinated approach, systemic barriers may arise from doing SEL work in a silo:

- Collaboration Challenges: Different agencies (health, human services, juvenile justice, etc.) often operate in silos, making it difficult to align their goals and resources effectively.
- Equity Concerns: While the paragraph mentions grounding strategies in equity, systemic inequities can hinder access to SEL resources for marginalized communities.
- Data Sharing Issues: Effective collaboration relies on the sharing of best practices and data, but privacy regulations and lack of interoperable systems can obstruct this.
- Addressing these barriers is crucial for the successful implementation of SEL.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority Recommendation

- 1. Designate SEL to be an explicit component of a fully implemented Multi-Tiered System of Support. Provide dedicated basic education funding to support systemic implementation of social emotional learning through direct instruction, professional learning, capacity building, and efforts to improve school climate.**

This can be done by doing the following:

- a. Integrating regional MTSS capacity building with PD on adult capacity around SEL.
- b. Including SEL in statewide implementation and progress monitoring of MTSS.
- c. Offering additional FTE to include school-based supports for educators including family engagement specialists, classified staff providing student and staff safety, or assistant principals to work on SEL school culture.
- d. Mandating an additional professional development day every year on SEL with a focus on building adult capacity for SEL.
- e. Providing additional grants to school districts to support professional development on the direct instruction of SEL, professional learning and capacity building for educators, and collaborative efforts to measure and improve school climate.

Rationale:

SEL integrated within a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework promotes academic success, supports a positive school climate, advances equity and inclusion, and prepares students for success in school and beyond. By embedding SEL principles across all tiers of support, schools create an environment where social emotional skills are nurtured alongside academic skills. When students have strong SEL skills, they are better equipped to focus on learning, manage emotions, make responsible choices, and interact positively with peers and teachers.

Integrating SEL within MTSS takes a whole-child approach, recognizing that academic success is intrinsically linked to social and emotional development. Within an MTSS framework, interventions are tailored to individual student needs, providing targeted support for those requiring additional assistance. When SEL is utilized in relevant interventions, educators can promote academic success and prevent struggles and behavioral challenges from escalating. This personalized approach ensures that students receive the support they need to overcome obstacles, fosters a sense of belonging and promotes overall well-being.

Families are included in the MTSS process to ensure that interventions promote equity by considering diverse family backgrounds, perspectives, values, and needs. Engaging families adds a layer of accountability, as their input and involvement hold the education system responsible for delivering effective support and interventions that meet the needs of all students.

Washington school districts are at varying stages of implementing SEL within an MTSS Framework. Dedicated resources are needed to expand and support fidelity of implementation. Ongoing challenges exist in schools and classrooms around dysregulated and stressed students and overwhelmed educators. SEL instruction at Tier 1 acknowledges the critical importance of emotions, relationships, and connection in academic learning. Addressing SEL skills proactively helps prevent the development of behavioral and emotional challenges that result in lost learning time and require more intensive interventions in schools.

Additional recommendations of the Committee are:

- 2. Increase funding to strengthen state level infrastructure support for SEL implementation to support the increased workload to champion the crucial SEL work identified by the committee. Funding is needed to:**
 - a. Develop materials for educators on how the SEL standards, benchmarks, and indicators are present in diverse cultures and how to engage students in a culturally responsive way.**
 - b. Develop and disseminate tools and guidance to school districts on effective partnerships with local tribes on social emotional learning implementation.**
 - c. Support research, data analysis, and statewide collaboration and develop one site where information from other state agencies and**

reports may be housed. Highlight interconnected recommendations from various groups/agencies.

Rationale:

Increased funding for the Committee would allow it to fulfill its charge to promote and expand SEL in our state. This funding will be used to develop new guidance and collect and distribute existing resources on SEL, to coordinate communication and implementation efforts, and to provide technical assistance around implementation, laws, and policies. There is also a need to examine data, studies, and information from other statewide groups and agencies such as, the Office of Native Education, the Special Education Advisory Council, early learning partners, Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight & Accountability Committee (EOGOAC), advocacy organizations, higher education, UW School Mental Health Assessment Research & Training (SMART) Center.

SEL focused on culture and equity promotes social justice by addressing systemic barriers and biases that impact students' development. Efforts should target those furthest from educational justice, especially communities of color and American Indian and Alaska Native communities. With guidance and resources emphasizing equity, districts and schools can work to dismantle inequities and create more opportunities for all students to thrive. Recognizing and valuing diverse cultural backgrounds within SEL initiatives ensures students see themselves reflected in the curriculum. By incorporating culturally sustaining and affirming SEL strategies, educators can better address the unique needs of students from diverse cultural, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This enhances students' sense of belonging and wellbeing and fosters positive relationships and understanding among peers. Culturally sustaining and affirming SEL practices foster critical thinking and advocacy skills essential for civic engagement. By integrating culture and equity into SEL initiatives, schools build a more just and inclusive society where all students succeed.

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

Rationale:

A positive school climate, as assessed through evidence-based climate surveys, has a direct impact on student social emotional development and academic outcomes.

Research has consistently shown that when students feel safe, supported, and valued within their school environment, they are more likely to be engaged in their learning and perform better academically (Durlak et al., 2010).

Implementing climate surveys in schools is crucial to provide valuable insights into the overall atmosphere of the school environment, including students' and staff members' perceptions of safety, inclusivity, and belonging. Understanding these dynamics allows school administrators to identify areas of school environmental strengths and those areas needing improvement, the results can enable targeted interventions to enhance the student-staff relationships and overall school climate. A positive school climate fosters student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement, while also promoting staff satisfaction and retention.

A climate survey serves as a tool for promoting involvement and accountability. By soliciting input from students, families, teachers, and other staff members, schools demonstrate a commitment to shared decision-making and continuous improvement. Engaging students, educators, and families in the assessment process increases buy-in for subsequent initiatives and ensures that interventions reflect the diverse perspectives within the school community. An effective climate survey empowers schools to cultivate a supportive, inclusive, and more equitable environment where everyone belongs.

4. Amend RCW 28A.300.477 to expand the membership of the Committee to include a representative of the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), and a representative working in early learning from the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)

Rationale:

The Committee brings together the collective expertise of its members who have a wide range of experiences working with youth and families in educational and community settings. The Committee was established to build upon the work of the SEL Benchmarks Workgroup (2015– 2016) and SEL Indicators Workgroup (2017–2019) to promote and expand SEL implementation in WA state. Amending this RCW to include the above-named bodies will allow the Committee to fulfill its purpose and charge to develop and implement a statewide framework for SEL implementation.

SEL initiatives require a holistic approach that considers students' well-being both inside and outside the classroom. Collaborating with agencies like health departments, human services, and juvenile justice provides a whole-child perspective. This coordinated approach maximizes the reach and impact of SEL efforts. This change will enhance the

sustainability and scalability of SEL initiatives through sharing best practices and data, fostering continuous improvement based on evidence-based research, and support the development of coordinated strategies to support SEL implementation that are grounded in equity.

5. Provide funding to develop and conduct a social emotional learning needs assessment.

- a. Provide funding to PESB to conduct a needs assessment to identify SEL capacity, understanding of bias, equity, culturally sustaining, trauma-informed and universally designed practices, and SEL implementation process for faculty and candidates participating in an education preparation program.**
- b. Provide funding to OSPI to conduct a needs assessment to systematically review and evaluate policies and procedures, culturally sustaining practices, fidelity of SEL implementation utilizing the Washington SEL standards, and barriers to SEL implementation in schools.**

Rationale:

Having a comprehensive understanding of the SEL landscape within educator preparation and K–12 is immensely beneficial. The PESB should collaborate with OSPI in the development of the needs assessments to review alignment and the expectations for teacher preparation and K–12 professional development, standards, and other relevant requirements. This alignment will ensure that both pre-service and in-service educators are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support students' social and emotional development from preschool through high school. Collaboration between OSPI and PESB promotes accountability and continuous improvement within the education system to effectively support the social and emotional well-being of all students.

At the educator preparation level, the information collected can be used to identify next steps for PESB and preparation programs in the program review process, the development of educator and principal standards. At the K–12 level, the needs assessment would help OSPI and LEAs to systematically review and evaluate policies and procedures, culturally sustaining practices, fidelity of SEL implementation utilizing the Washington SEL standards and overall climate, which will provide valuable insights into

areas of strength and areas needing improvement. OSPI could use this information to provide guidance and ongoing professional development for educators.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

Districts shared that they are using Title IV, Part A federal funding to provide SEL capacity building, guidance, professional learning, and coaching. In many districts and schools, staffing and resources for SEL will be dramatically reduced and in some cases eliminated entirely because of budget shortfalls. It is more important than ever that the Committee continue this crucial work to provide guidance around embedding SEL in the education system pipeline.

The Student SEL Assessment subcommittee will need additional meetings to finalize the framework. The subcommittee is committed to developing a plan for ongoing feedback to ensure the framework continues to evolve and improve based on input from diverse stakeholders.

The Family and Community Engagement Subcommittee hopes to continue to foster meaningful relationships with families, local organizations, and educators, thereby promoting the need for equitable access to SEL resources and enriching SEL implementation across Washington state.

The EPP subcommittee plans to continue the SELEPP to promote the inclusion of SEL in educator preparation and beyond. They will also work to:

- Support the future development of educator standards for SEL.
- Better understand what the needs are and what the standards should look like
- Continued connection and collaboration with EPPs to address the needs of programs, faculty, and candidates
- Finding the right methods and avenues for connecting with the field. The group looks forward to exploring ways to bring together those in the field, for example sharing during Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (WACTE) and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) meetings.
- Connecting with the national community by putting a proposal to share at a conference (Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL) or another national organization, or Washington Education Research Association (WERA)).

SEL Implementation Data Subcommittee next steps are:

- Refine the rubric based on feedback.
- Expand professional development to support adult SEL competencies.
- Address opportunity gaps by ensuring SEL implementation is equitable and accessible across all school communities.
- Identify district-wide strategies for strengthening family and community engagement.

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- Angela Allen, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
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- Ruth Cross, Collaborative for Academic Social Emotional Learning
- Danielle Eidenberg, former Committee member
- Gayle Flemming, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Megan Gildin, American Institutes for Research
- Maria Muto, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Debra Parker, former Committee member
- Heather Rees, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Kara Todd, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Ken Turner, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Michelle Sorenson, former Committee member
- Christian Stark, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Emme Williamson, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

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

The framework commits to four guiding principles:

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

The framework has the following three essential elements:

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

Appendix B

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