



BEST PRACTICES IN SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Prepared for Utah Leading through Effective, Actionable, and Dynamic Education

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In the following report, Hanover Research and ULEAD examine research-based strategies for effective social-emotional learning (SEL) programs in PK-12 schools. This report is intended to support districts working to improve their social-emotional learning curriculum and instruction and standardize implementation across school sites.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is emerging as a key indicator of student success. SEL correlates with positive academic outcomes,¹ and employers increasingly emphasize “soft skills” as necessary traits for success in the workplace.² Furthermore, the 2015 federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) encourages states to integrate non-academic measures – including SEL – into their school accountability systems.³

To provide high-quality support and services to its districts and constituents, Utah Leading through Effective, Actionable, and Dynamic Education (ULEAD) is interested in understanding best practices in social-emotional learning. To support this effort, Hanover Research (Hanover) reviewed empirical research, expert literature, and state and district SEL policies around SEL implementation. This report includes two sections:

- **Section I: Defining Social-Emotional Learning** explores definitions of SEL and discusses the core competencies associated with SEL.
- **Section II: Implementing Social-Emotional Learning** investigates district-, school-, and individual-level strategies that support SEL. These strategies range from establishing a positive school climate, to valid assessments, to classroom instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Districts leaders should consider:



Implementing a robust, integrated SEL curriculum. Typically, SEL curriculum models include direct instruction of SEL competencies and integrate SEL into core subject matter. The curriculum may also include active learning and take-home activities.



Incorporating SEL into all district operations to extend the reach beyond the classroom. In addition to providing SEL instruction to students, districts should also offer SEL training to staff members and engage families in the SEL programming.



Evaluating the efficacy of SEL programming using a mixed-methods approach to evaluation. More specifically, districts can use observational methods, surveys, character report cards, and performance-based tasks to evaluate students’ social emotional skill development.

¹ “SEL Research.” CASEL. <http://www.casel.org/research/>

² Blad, E. “Teachers Weave Social-Emotional Learning into Academics.” *Education Week*, March 5, 2017. <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/05/10/teachers-weave-social-emotional-learning-into-academics.html>

³ Felton, E. “When Social and Emotional Learning is Key to College Success.” *The Atlantic*, March 2, 2016. <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/03/when-social-and-emotional-learning-is-key-to-college-success/471813/>

KEY FINDINGS

- **SEL refers to the skills and knowledge that students need to communicate effectively, interact with peers, resolve conflicts, and manage their emotional responses to stressful situations.** Though precise definitions of SEL vary, most researchers agree that SEL programming should address communication, executive functioning, and problem-solving skills. For example, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL in terms of five competencies: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness.
- **To standardize SEL programming across the district, districts should develop their own definition of SEL, a vision statement, and a districtwide implementation plan.** The district should form a committee of school stakeholders to review school resources, assess the role of SEL in the district, and then draft the vision statement and implementation plan. A clear vision statement articulates a district’s desired outcomes and primary motivation for delivering SEL. The implementation plan details a timeline for SEL program design and delivery, outlines key practices school staff will use, and sets specific and measurable objectives for SEL programming.
- **SEL programming should encompass both academic and non-academic aspects of district operations.** Staff members should model SEL competencies in their daily interactions with students and each other, and the district should provide targeted training to develop employees’ own SEL competencies and ability to deliver SEL instruction. In addition, the district should develop clear policies to guide implementation of SEL programming and use multifaceted communication strategies to engage families and communities in the SEL process.
- **SEL curriculum models feature direct instruction of SEL skills, integration with academic subject matter, active learning tasks, and supplemental home-based activities.** Through explicit skill instruction, teachers can describe and model strategies for students to use in their own lives and clarify situations where skills are best applied. Active learning opportunities, such as role-playing and games, also help students practice SEL skills. Teachers can also promote SEL development at home by assigning students work to complete with their parents. Importantly, SEL instruction is most effective when classroom management strategies encourage positive behavior, allow autonomy, and facilitate dialogue about students’ development.
- **The efficacy of SEL programming can be evaluated using student observations, surveys, student report cards, and performance tasks.** Teachers can gather and provide qualitative feedback on students’ SEL competencies using tools such as narrative reports, checklists, and survey instruments. Some schools issue “character report cards” or incorporate SEL assessments into regularly issued academic report cards, allowing for consistent opportunities to provide feedback and track student progress. Further, performance tasks require students to complete activities that evaluate their understanding of social and emotional dynamics as well as their ability to assess interpersonal exchanges.

SECTION I: DEFINING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

This section presents definitions of SEL and its core competencies. This section also describes how such definitions may be applied in a school setting, including recommended processes by which a district can establish its own definition, vision, and plan for implementing SEL.

OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Researchers, educators, and state departments of education have developed multiple definitions of SEL.⁴ In a 2017 report, researchers from the Harvard Graduate School of Education note that SEL is defined in a variety of ways and often serves as an umbrella term for specific sub-fields of psychology and human development.⁵ Definitions of SEL may include references to cognition, behavior, executive functioning, and character.⁶ Given the conceptual fluidity surrounding SEL, researchers advise districts to establish their own understanding of and definition for SEL to ensure consistent program implementation across school sites.⁷ This subsection presents a selection of commonly-embraced definitions of SEL.



Heterogeneity in SEL Definitions

Definitions of SEL vary across educational agencies. To ensure consistent understanding and implementation of SEL across school sites, districts should draft their own definitions of SEL.

Broadly speaking, **SEL refers to the skills and practical knowledge that students need to communicate effectively, interact with peers, resolve conflicts, and manage their emotional responses to stressful situations.**⁸ The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)—an organization dedicated to the promotion of SEL—defines SEL as:⁹

...the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set

⁴ "Social and Emotional Learning and Afterschool Programs." March 7, 2017.

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/social-emotional-learning.aspx>

⁵ Jones, S., K. Brush, et al. "Navigating SEL from the Inside Out, Looking Inside and Across 25 Leading SEL Programs: A Practical Resource for Schools and OST Providers." Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2017. p. 12.

<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Navigating-Social-and-Emotional-Learning-from-the-Inside-Out.pdf>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Vision." CASEL District Resource Center. <https://drc.casel.org/vision>

⁸ "Social and Emotional Learning." American Institutes for Research. <http://www.air.org/topic/social-and-emotional-learning>

⁹ [1] "About CASEL." CASEL. <http://www.casel.org/about-2/> [2] Quotation taken verbatim from: "What Is SEL?" CASEL. <http://www.casel.org/what-is-sel/>

and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Other organizations define SEL in the context of college and career readiness. The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) states that the skills developed through SEL “round out a student’s education and impact his/her academic success, employability, self-esteem, relationships, as well as civic and community engagement.”¹⁰ The Committee for Children—a nonprofit organization that promotes SEL and the overall safety and well-being of children—reinforces this determination by analyzing the applicability of SEL-based skills to the professional sphere (see Figure 1.1).¹¹ Namely, behaviors developed through SEL (e.g., empathy, impulse control) can help students adapt to dynamic work environments and collaborate effectively among a diverse professional staff.

Figure 1.1: SEL and Workforce Readiness

SKILL	WORKPLACE APPLICABILITY
EMPATHY	Helps businesses meet the needs of customers
EMOTION MANAGEMENT	Helps workers deal with conflicts in their personal and professional lives
EMOTION RECOGNITION	Helps employees understand others’ mindsets, informing personal interactions
PROBLEM-SOLVING	Thinking through a problem and brainstorming solutions is valued by employers
IMPULSE CONTROL	Thinking carefully before acting or communicating can help avoid crises
COMMUNICATION	Listening respectfully and focusing attention is essential to teamwork
ASSERTIVENESS	Helps workers get what they want or need without insulting or offending others

Source: Committee for Children¹²

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING FRAMEWORKS

CASEL developed one of the most comprehensive frameworks for defining and implementing SEL, consisting of five core competencies, as described in Figure 1.2 on the following page. *Self-awareness* and *self-management* directly relate to an individual’s ability to recognize and regulate their emotional reactions and direct behavior accordingly. *Social awareness* and *relationship skills* impact interpersonal interactions, specifically a person’s ability to assess the emotions of those around them and to respond appropriately. *Responsible decision-making* refers to an individual’s ability to make judgments about their own and others’ emotions and actions to solve problems and to facilitate constructive exchanges with others.¹³

¹⁰ “Social and Emotional Learning and Afterschool Programs,” Op. cit.

¹¹ “About Us.” Committee for Children. <http://www.cfchildren.org/about-us>

¹² Figure adapted from: “Social-Emotional Learning.” Committee for Children. <http://www.cfchildren.org/second-step/social-emotional-learning>

¹³ “Core SEL Competencies.” CASEL. <http://www.casel.org/core-competencies/>

Figure 1.2: CASEL’s Core SEL Competencies

COMPETENCY	DESCRIPTION	ASSOCIATED SKILLS
SELF-AWARENESS	Accurately recognizing one’s own emotions, values, strengths, and limits and how they influence behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identifying emotions ▪ Accurate self-perception ▪ Recognizing strengths ▪ Self-confidence ▪ Self-efficacy
SELF-MANAGEMENT	Regulating one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Impulse control ▪ Stress management ▪ Self-discipline ▪ Self-motivation ▪ Goal-setting ▪ Organizational skills
SOCIAL AWARENESS	Empathizing with others and understanding behavioral norms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Perspective-taking ▪ Empathy ▪ Appreciating diversity ▪ Respect for others
RELATIONSHIP SKILLS	Communicating clearly, cooperating with others, negotiating conflict, and seeking and offering help if needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communication ▪ Social engagement ▪ Relationship-building ▪ Teamwork
RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING	Making constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions and evaluating the consequences of actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identifying problems ▪ Analyzing situations ▪ Solving problems ▪ Evaluating ▪ Reflecting ▪ Ethical responsibility

Source: CASEL¹⁴

Researchers from the Harvard Graduate School of Education developed a similarly comprehensive framework that includes 12 different SEL skills linked to student outcomes (see Figure 1.3 on the following page). Under this paradigm, ten skills are divided into three categories—cognitive, emotional, and behavioral—with two other additional skills. These skills relate to a student’s ability to manage multiple cognitive and emotional demands while navigating social dynamics with poise and positivity.¹⁵

¹⁴ Figure adapted from: Ibid.

¹⁵ Jones, Brush, et al., Op. cit., p. 18.

Figure 1.3: SEL Skills Linked to Student Outcomes

SKILL	DESCRIPTION
COGNITIVE SKILLS	
Attention Control	Attending to relevant information and goal-directed tasks while resisting distractions.
Inhibitory Control	Suppressing or modifying a behavioral response to attain a longer-term goal.
Working Memory and Planning Skills	Maintaining and manipulating information over a relatively short period; identifying and organizing the steps needed to achieve a desired goal.
Cognitive Flexibility	Switching one’s thinking about different concepts and redirecting one’s attention.
EMOTIONAL SKILLS	
Emotion Knowledge and Expression	Recognizing, understanding, and labeling emotions in oneself and others and to expressing one’s feelings in contextually appropriate ways.
Emotion and Behavior Regulation	Using effortful control strategies to modify the intensity or duration of emotional arousal and to learn and conform to expectations for appropriate social behavior.
Empathy and Perspective-Taking	Understanding another person’s emotional state and point of view.
INTERPERSONAL SKILLS	
Understanding Social Cues	Interpreting cues from the social environment and using them to understand others’ behavior.
Conflict Resolution and Problem-Solving	Generating solutions and acting on effective strategies for challenging situations and conflicts.
Prosocial Skills	Organizing and navigating social relationships.
ADDITIONAL SKILLS	
Character	Culturally determined skills and habits required to understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values and perform to one’s highest potential in achievement or work contexts.
Mindset	Attitudes and beliefs about oneself, others, and one’s own circumstances that impact one’s interpretation of and response to events and daily interactions.

Source: Harvard Graduate School of Education¹⁶

COMMON SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING DEFINITIONS AND PROTOCOLS

Effective implementation of SEL requires a shared definition, vision statement, and implementation plan to articulate what students will be offered through SEL and outline a common foundation for program design. When a district has a clear definition and a comprehensive vision statement, stakeholders can better understand how SEL matches district priorities and inspires support to achieve target outcomes. CASEL recommends that districts draft policy documents *after* introducing SEL to relevant stakeholders but *before* developing a formal curriculum. The SEL definition and vision statement should come first, followed by the implementation plan.¹⁷

¹⁶ Figure adapted from: Ibid.

¹⁷ “Vision,” Op. cit.

CASEL recommends that districts form a collaborative committee representing key stakeholder groups to develop SEL definitions and vision statements. This team should consider the following key questions to clarify district objectives:¹⁸

- What do we want all students to know and be able to do upon graduation? What social and emotional competencies should they have?
- What are our district's goals, outcomes, and/or core values?
- How does SEL promote those goals, outcomes, core values, and student skills?
- What kind of culture and climate does our district want?
- What will our district look like after achieving our SEL vision?

Once committee members have articulated answers to these questions, they can compose preliminary drafts of SEL definitions and vision statements and solicit feedback from the broader district staff and community. Districts should communicate the finalized policy documents to stakeholders and revise those documents as necessary.¹⁹

Figure 1.4 on the following page displays CASEL's recommended process for developing a comprehensive plan to implement SEL, to be guided by the finalized definition and vision statement. Districts should assemble another collaborative team to draft the plan and publicize its importance to the community. In this process, the committee should assess district resources, align them to support SEL programming, and research effective SEL practices. As the district composes the plan, it should invite feedback from relevant stakeholders to ensure consistent understanding of and commitment to the plan before finalization and publication.²⁰

¹⁸ Bulleted text quoted verbatim from: Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Figure 1.4: SEL Planning Process

STEP	DESCRIPTION
1. Prepare for planning sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify possible SEL planning committee members. ▪ Establish a timeline for creating the plan. ▪ Look for ways to publicize the importance and purpose of SEL.
2. Draft the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct a resource and needs assessment across the district and schools. ▪ Align resources to support SEL programming. ▪ Develop expertise in SEL theory, research, and practice. ▪ Design and implement effective professional learning programs. ▪ Communicate about SEL with a variety of stakeholders. ▪ Establish PK-12 learning standards for SEL. ▪ Adopt and implement evidence-based SEL programs in all schools. ▪ Integrate SEL with other existing priorities, including academic instruction. ▪ Establish systems to improve SEL programming.
3. Solicit feedback and revise the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide other key stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback. ▪ Revise and finalize the plan.
4. Publicize the completed SEL plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Present the plan to key stakeholders who were not involved in its development. ▪ Integrate the plan into the district’s web presence. ▪ Revisit the planning timeline regularly and publicize progress toward goals.
5. Review and update plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revise the plan using data from benchmark assessments and for shifting priorities.

Source: CASEL²¹

²¹ Figure adapted from: Ibid.

SECTION II: IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

This section discusses instructional strategies, curricula, and assessments that support effective SEL. The section begins with an overview of organizational practices that promote SEL, then discusses curriculum and instruction, and concludes with an examination of SEL assessments.

ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

CASEL emphasizes that “SEL is not a standalone program, but rather, a set of principles and practices that support success across your district.”²² In addition to offering SEL instruction at the classroom level, districts can integrate SEL into *all* aspects of daily operations to ensure a systemic commitment to SEL. SEL is more effective and sustainable when delivered through multiple structures, and systemic adoption may improve the likelihood that SEL programs persist through staffing changes, budget reductions, or shifting district priorities.²³



District-Wide Integration

“SEL is not a standalone program, but rather, a set of principles and practices that support success across your district.”

Districts should actively foster safe and supportive academic, disciplinary, and physical environments, and encourage respectful, caring relationships among staff and students.²⁴

District- and school-wide activities (e.g., assemblies) can encourage positive behaviors, beliefs, and values, and adult behaviors should mirror this positivity. District leadership can also publish clear policies to reinforce SEL practices and to facilitate consistent protocols across school sites. Such guidance may extend to extracurricular activities, such as sports and clubs, using supplemental learning tasks.²⁵ Implementing these initiatives will help establish a positive learning environment characterized by strong interpersonal relationships and students who feel secure to take risks and confident that their basic needs will be met.²⁶

Additionally, districts should provide staff with professional development opportunities and guidance on how to implement SEL. Training sessions must conscientiously target specific staff populations and should be tailored to district and school needs.²⁷ Schools may

²² “Integration.” CASEL District Resource Center. <https://drc.casel.org/integration>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Yoder, N. “Teaching the Whole Child: Instructional Practices That Support Social-Emotional Learning in Three Teacher Evaluation Frameworks.” Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at American Institutes for Research, 2014. p. 2. <http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/TeachingtheWholeChild.pdf>

²⁵ Jones, Brush, et al., Op. cit., p. 26.

²⁶ Yoder, Op. cit., p. 9.

²⁷ Jones, Brush, et al., Op. cit., p. 26.

use a professional learning community (PLC) model to deliver training or integrate training into existing meetings. Site visits to other schools that are already using SEL and inviting outside consultants to discuss SEL are other effective options for professional development.²⁸ Districts may also partner with peer districts to exchange information about SEL practices and facilitate knowledge sharing.²⁹ As an example, Davis School District in Farmington, Utah offers professional development for its teachers on creating positive learning environments, helping students learn what to do when they are a victim of or witness bullying, and supporting students with anxiety or oppositional behaviors.³⁰

To supplement the knowledge gained from training, districts should draft clear policies on mandatory features of SEL and how to implement SEL with special populations of students (e.g., students with disabilities). District protocols should offer guidance such as who will deliver SEL instruction and what resources will be used in delivery (see Figure 2.1).³¹ Staff should also receive access to supports such as tool kits, coaching opportunities, scripted lessons, and strategies to adapt materials to diverse contexts.³²

Figure 2.1: Considerations for Implementing SEL Organizational Practices

- ❖ Who will implement the program? Most programs require that teachers facilitate activities, but others allow counselors, youth advocates, mentors, and other qualified personnel to do so.
- ❖ When should the program be implemented? During what subject, period, or time of day? Will schools have a choice?
- ❖ How will the program be implemented? Through direct instruction? With technology? With pre-determined instructional strategies?
- ❖ What time frame does implementation require? How often is the program implemented? For how long? With what gaps in between?
- ❖ Will the district require the use of supplemental materials, or will this be the school's choice? If required, when should supplemental lessons be implemented, and by whom?
- ❖ Will the district require the use of family lessons or take-home materials, or will this be the school's choice? If required, when should these be implemented and by whom?

Source: CASEL³³

Schools should engage families in SEL through targeted activities and special events. For example, teachers may send home assignments for parents to complete with students targeting a specific SEL skill. Similarly, the district may host a family workshop about students' emotional and behavioral development. Practices such as career nights and community service projects can also build connections between students and their local communities.³⁴

²⁸ "Build Expertise." CASEL District Resource Center. <https://drc.casel.org/build-expertise>

²⁹ "Key Implementation Insights from Collaborating Districts Initiative." CASEL, 2017. p. 18. <http://www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CDI-Insights-Report-May.pdf>

³⁰ "Professional Learning." Davis School District. <https://www.davis.k12.ut.us/employees/hub/social-emotional-learning>

³¹ "Programming." CASEL District Resource Center. <https://drc.casel.org/programming>

³² Jones, Brush, et al., Op. cit., p. 26.

³³ Figure adapted from: "Programming," Op. cit.

³⁴ Jones, Brush, et al., Op. cit., p. 26.

Further, **districts should implement a comprehensive communication initiative to increase family and community investment in SEL programs.** When formulating communications, districts should consider the intended audience, desired message, and medium of delivery. A successful communication campaign can help increase awareness, encourage family and community enthusiasm, and invite stakeholder participation in SEL programs.³⁵ Possible strategies that communication plans might include are:³⁶

- Launch materials for key stakeholders;
- A website to introduce parents to SEL;
- A research brief for funders;
- Press releases and articles in local newspapers; and
- A website with general information about SEL as well as district-specific information about SEL standards, metrics, and data.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

CURRICULAR PROGRAMS

This section describes three established SEL curriculum models: the 4Rs Program, PATHS, and Expeditionary Learning. Common elements identified in these and other SEL curriculum models include direct instruction of SEL skills, integration with academic subjects, active learning activities (e.g., literary analysis, projects), and supplemental home-based activities.³⁷

4RS PROGRAM

The 4Rs Program (Reading, Writing, Respect, and Resolution) integrates SEL instruction into language arts activities for students from PreK to Grade 5.³⁸ In 2013, CASEL identified the program as an effective SEL program for preschool and elementary school implementation, citing its opportunities to practice SEL skills and its extensive integration into classroom, school, and family contexts.³⁹

The 4Rs Program uses children’s literature as an anchor to explore themes such as conflict, feelings, relationships, and community. Students participate in reading, writing, discussion, and skills practice to encourage a multitude of SEL behaviors such as assertiveness and cooperation. The curriculum is grade-specific, featuring age-appropriate activities, books, and teacher guides to support instruction. Specifically, the 4Rs curriculum features seven units

³⁵ “Communication.” CASEL District Resource Center. <https://drc.casel.org/communication>

³⁶ Bulleted text quoted verbatim from: Ibid.

³⁷ [1] “2013 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs-Preschool and Elementary School Edition.” CASEL, 2012. <http://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2013-casel-guide-1.pdf> [2] “2015 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs-Middle and High School Edition.” CASEL, 2015. <http://secondaryguide.casel.org/casel-secondary-guide.pdf>

³⁸ “The 4Rs Program.” Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility. <http://www.morningsidecenter.org/4rs-program>

³⁹ “2013 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs-Preschool and Elementary School Edition,” Op. cit., p. 43.

and an average of 35 lessons per grade featuring integrated language arts and SEL in tandem with explicit skills instruction. Classroom activities include extension activities, infusion ideas, and recommendations for further reading. The 4Rs program even includes 4Rs Family Connections, activity sheets that students can complete at home with their parents.⁴⁰

Notably, the 4Rs Program has proven to demonstrate a positive impact on students' SEL competencies.⁴¹ In a study tracking a Grade 3 cohort's development from 2003 to 2006 in New York City's public schools, students receiving 4Rs-based instruction displayed the following attributes when compared to students in a control group receiving no 4Rs instruction:⁴²

- Lower levels of teacher-reported aggression;
- Less tendency to ascribe hostile motives to others in ambiguous social situations;
- Fewer symptoms of depression;
- Fewer symptoms of attention and hyperactivity problems; and
- Increases in social competence.

PATHS

CASEL also named the PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) curriculum as an effective SEL program for preschool and elementary students, citing its explicit skills instruction and extensive integration into classroom, school, and family contexts as strengths.⁴³ The curriculum features lessons and instructional materials that develop "emotional literacy, self-control, social competence, positive peer relations, and interpersonal problem-solving skills" designed for students from PreK to Grade 6.⁴⁴

PATHS instruction is typically delivered two or three times per week in 30-minute sessions.⁴⁵ Lessons follow a script that progresses from an introduction reviewing lesson background and objectives to activities related to the target SEL concept or skill. Lessons end with suggestions for how to apply newly-learned skills and knowledge beyond the classroom.⁴⁶ In addition,

⁴⁰ "2013 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs-Preschool and Elementary School Edition," Op. cit., p. 43.

⁴¹ [1] Jones, S.M., J.L. Brown, et al. "A School-Randomized Clinical Trial of an Integrated Social-Emotional Learning and Literacy Intervention: Impacts After 1 School Year." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 78:6, 2010. p. 836. <http://doi.apa.org/getdoi.cfm?doi=10.1037/a0021383> [2] Jones, S.M., J.L. Brown, and J. Lawrence Aber. "Two-Year Impacts of a Universal School-Based Social-Emotional and Literacy Intervention: An Experiment in Translational Developmental Research: Experiment in Translational Developmental Research." *Child Development*, 82:2, March 2011. p. 533. <http://doi.wiley.com/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01560.x>

⁴² Bulleted text quoted verbatim from: "4Rs Research Study." Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility. <http://www.morningsidecenter.org/4rs-research-study>

⁴³ "2013 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs-Preschool and Elementary School Edition," Op. cit., p. 53.

⁴⁴ "The PATHS Curriculum." PATHS Training. <http://www.pathstraining.com/main/curriculum/>

⁴⁵ "Fully Scripted, Developmentally Appropriate Lesson Plans." Channing Bete Company. <http://www.channing-bete.com/prevention-programs/paths/lessons.html>

⁴⁶ "2013 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs-Preschool and Elementary School Edition," Op. cit., p. 53.

lessons provide materials for students to bring home and suggestions for supplemental home-based activities to build parental support and encourage involvement.⁴⁷

A 2015 research study published in *Psychology of the Schools* found that students participating in the PATHS program “demonstrated increases in emotional understanding and prosocial behavior.”⁴⁸ Further, another evaluation of PATHS published in *The Journal of Primary Prevention* concluded that preschool students receiving PATHS instruction “had higher emotion knowledge skills and were rated by parents and teachers as more socially competent compared to peers.”⁴⁹ PATHS students have also displayed improvements in their:⁵⁰

- Problem-solving and planning skills;
- Ability to tolerate frustration;
- Working memory; and
- Impulsivity control.

EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

Expeditionary Learning focuses on three dimensions of student achievement – knowledge and skills mastery, character, and high-quality student work – and builds upon ten foundational principles (see Figure 2.2). These principles promote SEL and help students develop competencies that bolster perseverance, empathy, responsibility, and collaboration.⁵¹

Figure 2.2: Ten Building Blocks of Expeditionary Learning

1. The Primacy of Self-Discovery	6. Collaboration and Competition
2. The Having of Wonderful Ideas	7. Diversity and Inclusion
3. The Responsibility for Learning	8. The Natural World
4. Empathy and Caring	9. Solitude and Reflection
5. Success and Failure	10. Service and Compassion

Source: EL Education⁵²

In its 2015 guide to effective SEL programs for middle and high school students, CASEL states Expeditionary Learning is effective in middle school, though the program is deliverable to

⁴⁷ “Comprehensive, Grade-Specific Classroom Modules.” Channing Bete Company. <http://www.channing-bete.com/prevention-programs/paths/modules.html>

⁴⁸ Gibson, J.E., S.S. Werner, and A. Sweeney. “Evaluating an Abbreviated Version of the PATHS Curriculum Implemented by School Mental Health Clinicians.” *Psychology in the Schools*, 52:6, July 2015. p. 549. <http://doi.wiley.com/10.1002/pits.21844>

⁴⁹ Domitrovich, C.E., R.C. Cortes, and M.T. Greenberg. “Improving Young Children’s Social and Emotional Competence: A Randomized Trial of the Preschool ‘PATHS’ Curriculum.” *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 28:2, March 13, 2007. p. 67. <http://link.springer.com/10.1007/s10935-007-0081-0>

⁵⁰ Bulleted text adapted from: “Research Overview: Evidence of Program Effectiveness.” PATHS Training. <http://www.pathstraining.com/main/research/>

⁵¹ “Redefining and Raising Student Achievement.” EL Education. <https://eleducation.org/who-we-are/our-approach>

⁵² Figure text taken directly from: Ibid.

students in Grades PK through 12. CASEL specifically cites Expeditionary Learning’s extensive integration in classroom, school, family, and community settings as well as its embedment in teaching practices, academic instruction, and organizational practices as strengths.⁵³ The curriculum integrates SEL principles into core academic subjects—language arts, social studies, math, and science—and the arts.⁵⁴

In a literature review on Expeditionary Learning, researchers from Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning conclude that the model’s “emphasis on character and motivation creates an atmosphere that encourages engagement through effort, persistence, civic engagement, and identification with school,” facilitating future student success.⁵⁵ Additionally, a district-specific report from Oakland Unified School District in California found that its implementation of Expeditionary Learning and other SEL strategies reduced student suspensions and helped sustain a districtwide commitment to positive school climate.⁵⁶

INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY

Classroom instruction should build students’ SEL competencies with a balanced approach.

Instruction can follow a cycle whereby the teacher: (1) sets lesson objectives; (2) introduces new concepts and models new skills; (3) provides opportunities for group and individual practice; and (4) allows time for self-reflection and assessment. Teachers can use both direct instruction on SEL topics and modeling of SEL skills in conjunction with active tasks that allow students to practice skills and apply knowledge. Throughout the lesson’s progression, instructional staff should monitor student interactions to ensure successful understanding and usage of SEL skills. Teachers may also ask students to reflect on their progress and assess how they can advance their proficiency with SEL skills.⁵⁷



Explicit Skill Instruction

Direct instruction on and teacher modeling of SEL skills are effective approaches to develop student competencies, especially when complemented by other strategies.

SEL instruction must also “implement a set of focused, high-quality, research-based teaching strategies” to effectively develop students’ SEL skills.⁵⁸ Researchers from the Harvard Graduate School of Education compiled a list of common SEL instructional practices used in PK-12 settings that can advance students’ SEL competencies. These strategies include discussion; role-playing situations where SEL skills are applicable; and the use of songs,

⁵³ “2015 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs-Middle and High School Edition,” Op. cit., p. 34.

⁵⁴ “Curriculum.” EL Education. <https://curriculum.eleducation.org/>

⁵⁵ Beesley, A. et al. “Expeditionary Learning Schools: Theory of Action and Literature Review of Motivation, Character, and Engagement.” Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), 2010. p. 38. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

⁵⁶ “Oakland.” CASEL. <http://www.casel.org/partner-districts/oakland-unified-school-district/>

⁵⁷ Yoder, Op. cit., pp. 15–18.

⁵⁸ Jones, Brush, et al., Op. cit., p. 19.

videos, and visuals to promote understanding (see Figure 2.3). As a practical example of a school using visual displays to promote SEL, an elementary school in Alpine School District in American Fork, Utah posts signs around the building “[encouraging] students to show respect, compassion, resilience, and self-mastery by entering into a drawing if they show those qualities.”⁵⁹

Figure 2.3: Common Instructional Practices for Developing SEL Skills

PRACTICE	DESCRIPTION
DISCUSSION	Discussions can occur in pairs, small groups, or as a class to introduce an SEL theme.
DIDACTIC INSTRUCTION	Teacher provides specific instructions and models an SEL skills.
BOOKS/STORIES	Teacher reads a book or story that illustrates a particular SEL theme.
VOCABULARY	Activities teach language, words, or terms related to an SEL concept.
TOOLS/HANDOUTS	Tools and handouts promote SEL strategies in a concrete way.
WRITING	Students write about personal experiences related to an SEL theme.
ART/CREATIVE PROJECTS	Students create art or a creative project related to an SEL theme.
VISUAL DISPLAYS	Teachers post charts, posters, or other visual displays related to SEL themes.
VIDEOS	Videos depict challenging situations and are used to prompt discussion around SEL topics.
SONGS	Songs reinforce an SEL theme and involve dances, hand movements, or strategy practice.
SKILLS PRACTICE	Students actively practice using SEL skills or strategies outside of a game or role-play scenario.
ROLE-PLAYING	At younger ages, this may involve a teacher simulating an SEL skill. At older ages, it may involve the entire class role-playing in pairs or two students performing in front of the class.
GAMES	Games can reinforce an SEL theme and build community.
KINESTHETIC	Activities involving student movement and physical activity can link SEL with motor functions.
OTHER	Any activity not captured by the above descriptions. Common examples include poetry, visualization exercises, meditation, and more.

Source: Harvard Graduate School of Education⁶⁰

Explicit skill instruction is an effective strategy to boost students’ SEL competencies. Teachers can specifically address how a given skill applies in daily life and can break down strategies into smaller, more manageable components. A teacher can then model the skill for students and clarify specific situations in which students can employ the skill. As lessons progress, students should receive opportunities to practice target skills and receive formative feedback until proficiency is evident.⁶¹ Teachers can further facilitate student SEL aptitudes –

⁵⁹ Dodson, B. “Alpine School District Board Discusses Social and Emotional Learning.” *Daily Herald*, October 10, 2018. https://www.heraldextra.com/news/local/education/precollegiate/alpine-school-district-board-discusses-social-and-emotional-learning/article_6cbdb059-7fac-574b-b7a9-2fde40fbe271.html

⁶⁰ Figure adapted from: *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

⁶¹ Ferlazzo, L. “Several Ways to Apply Social-Emotional Learning Strategies in The Classroom.” NoVo Foundation, January 31, 2012. <https://novofoundation.org/newsfromthefield/several-ways-to-apply-social-emotional-learning-strategies-in-the-classroom/>

specifically regarding interpersonal interactions – through cooperative learning tasks. In such tasks, students will need to navigate peer relationships, communicate effectively, and monitor progress toward formative and summative goals. To incentivize participation, teachers can establish collective and individual accountability measures.⁶²

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Effective classroom management strategies can improve SEL instruction as teachers strive to create a responsive classroom that nurtures student belonging and increases comfort. Establishing a responsive classroom can help “create a calm, orderly environment that promotes autonomy and allows students to focus on learning.”⁶³

Discipline should be student-centered and developmentally appropriate to students while also encouraging positive behavior. Students and teachers should collaborate to develop classroom rules. Similarly, teachers should avoid overmanaging students or using punitive measures to force compliance and instead opt for students to have opportunities for choice and self-direction in the classroom. Such actions will give students a voice and give them a chance for meaningful input in their education.⁶⁴

Teachers should also be conscientious of the language they use when speaking with students. Teachers should actively encourage student effort to use SEL-positive skills rather than exclusively praising achievement. For example, a teacher can say, “I see that you are trying harder to raise your hand before speaking,” instead of saying, “You did a great job listening today!” Teachers’ interactions with students should also highlight potential areas of improvement and advise students to monitor their own behavior. All verbal communications should be warm and supportive to demonstrate a caring attitude toward students while also demanding that they take responsibility for their own social and emotional development.⁶⁵

ASSESSMENTS

This subsection reviews four common assessment types – observations of students, surveys, character report cards, and performance tasks – that districts can use to evaluate SEL.

OBSERVATIONS OF STUDENTS

Student observations are the most common method for assessing SEL. In a survey of nearly 500 registered users of its website, *Education Week* found that observations of students by teachers or administrators occur in 59 percent of respondents’ schools.⁶⁶ Using this assessment strategy, the observing educator watches a student at work or play and records detailed notes about observed behaviors and activities. Effective notes should be objective

⁶² Yoder, Op. cit., pp. 14-15.

⁶³ “About Responsive Classroom.” Responsive Classroom. <https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/about/>

⁶⁴ Yoder, Op. cit., pp. 11–12.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 12–13.

⁶⁶ “Social and Emotional Learning: Perspectives from America’s Schools.” Education Week Research Center, 2015. p. 27. http://www.edweek.org/media/ewrc_selreport_june2015.pdf

and avoid subjective interpretations to maximize effectiveness. Common observation techniques include anecdotal records, narrative reports, behavior frequency counts, and checklists.⁶⁷

Observations are useful as students may be unaware that teachers are assessing them, resulting in a more genuine evaluation of SEL. For example, a teacher might unobtrusively observe two students role-playing a disagreement and assess whether students are using conflict resolution strategies as modeled during direct instruction.⁶⁸

SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

Surveys and questionnaires are the second most common method for assessing SEL per *Education Week's* user survey. In response to the question “Which (if any) of the following approaches does your school use to measure students’ [SEL]?” 45 percent of respondents said their school surveyed students, 39 percent said their school surveyed teachers, and 37 percent said their school surveyed parents.⁶⁹ Figure 2.4 on the following page provides a sample of commonly-used SEL survey instruments that are available for free or for purchase.

⁶⁷ “Observing, Recording, and Reporting Children’s Development.” Modesto Junior College. pp. 99–102.
<http://laffranchinid.faculty.mjc.edu/Ch5.pdf>

⁶⁸ Marzano, R.J. “Building SEL Skills Through Formative Assessment.” Edutopia, July 14, 2016.
<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/building-sel-skills-formative-assessment-robert-marzano>

⁶⁹ “Social and Emotional Learning: Perspectives from America’s Schools,” Op. cit., p. 27.

Figure 2.4: Sample Survey Instruments for Measuring SEL

CONSTRUCTS MEASURED	RESPONDENTS	INSTRUMENTS	AVAILABILITY
Gallup Student Poll⁷⁰			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hope ▪ Engagement ▪ Well-being 	Students Grades 5-12	20-item survey	Free to U.S. schools. Gallup analyzes and stores data.
Child Trends⁷¹			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Persistence ▪ Academic self-efficacy ▪ Mastery orientation ▪ Self-control ▪ Social competence 	Students and Teachers Grades K-5	14-item student survey 12-item teacher survey	Publicly available surveys and scoring guide provided in a 2014 Child Trends report.
CORE Districts SEL Survey⁷²			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growth mindset ▪ Self-efficacy ▪ Self-management ▪ Social awareness 	Students and Teachers Grades 4-12	3-item teacher rating scale 25-item student survey	Publicly available surveys and user guides in a 2016 Transforming Education and CORE Districts report.
Developmental Assets Profile (DAP)⁷³			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Empowerment ▪ Boundaries and expectations ▪ Constructive use of time ▪ Support ▪ Commitment to learning ▪ Positive values ▪ Social competence ▪ Positive identity 	Students Grades 4-12	58-item student survey	Available for purchase from the Search Institute .

⁷⁰ “Gallup Student Poll.” Gallup. https://www.gallup.com/services/180029/gallup-student-poll-2014-overall-report.aspx?g_source=link_WWWV9&g_medium=TOPIC&g_campaign=item_&g_content=Gallup%2520Student%2520Poll%25202014%2520U.S.%2520Overall%2520Report

⁷¹ “Measuring Elementary School Students’ Social and Emotional Skills: Providing Educators with Tools to Measure and Monitor Social and Emotional Skills That Lead to Academic Success.” Child Trends, 2014. pp. 6-10, 28, 31–33. <https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/2014-37CombinedMeasuresApproachandTablepdf1.pdf>

⁷² [1] Krachman, S.B., R. Arnold, and R. Larocca. “Expanding the Definition of Student Success: A Case Study of the CORE Districts.” Transforming Education, September 2016. pp. 10–11. <https://www.transformingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/TransformingEducationCaseStudyFINAL1.pdf> [2] “Social-Emotional Skills.” CORE Districts, 2015. pp. 2–4. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/uploads.hipchat.com/392387/2399075/UEvBNz8KwRWqcTY/SE-CC-Domain-Social-Emotional-Skills-updated-1.2.15.pdf> [3] Hough, H., D. Kalogrides, and S. Loeb. “Using Surveys of Students’ Social-Emotional Learning and School Climate for Accountability and Continuous Improvement.” Policy Analysis for California Education, 2017. p. 3. http://edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/SEL-CC_report.pdf [4] “Measuring MESH: Student and Teacher Surveys Curated for the CORE Districts.” Transforming Education and CORE Districts, April 2016. pp. 7, 21–26. https://www.transformingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/160406_MeasuringMESH_ForRelease2.pdf

⁷³ [1] “Are You Ready to Assess Social and Emotional Development? | Tools Index.” SEL Solutions at American Institutes for Research. p. 24. http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/AIR%20Ready%20to%20Assess_ACT_rev.pdf [2] “The Developmental Assets Profile (DAP).” Search Institute. <http://www.search-institute.org/surveys/dap>

CONSTRUCTS MEASURED	RESPONDENTS	INSTRUMENTS	AVAILABILITY
Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA)⁷⁴			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Optimistic thinking ▪ Relationship skills ▪ Self-awareness ▪ Personal responsibility ▪ Self-management ▪ Goal-directed behavior ▪ Social awareness ▪ Decision-making 	Parents and Teachers Grades K-8	72-item survey	Available for purchase from Aperture Education .

Source: Multiple sources cited in figure.

CHARACTER REPORT CARDS

Schools can also integrate SEL indicators into student report cards. Twenty-one percent of respondents to the *Education Week* survey on SEL assessments reported that their school included indicators of SEL on student report cards.⁷⁵ Districts and organizations such as San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) and the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) charter school network incorporate SEL competencies into report cards.⁷⁶ This method is advantageous as schools already allocate time and resources to completing and distributing report cards. In addition, incorporating SEL into regularly-issued report cards allows schools to track students’ progress over time, providing more insight into students’ skill development than the quantitative data obtained from student and teacher surveys. Report cards can also provide more frequent opportunities for conversations about positive behaviors and identifying students who may be at-risk.⁷⁷

KIPP issues Character Growth Cards for middle and high school students on a quarterly basis, which include a teacher and student self-rating of seven behaviors.⁷⁸ The assessed behaviors include curiosity, gratitude, grit, optimism, self-control, social intelligence, and zest. A rating of “1” indicates the student “Almost Never” performs the behavior, and a rating of “7” indicates the student “Almost Always” performs the behavior.⁷⁹ Figure 2.5 displays a sample portion of the Character Growth Card used to rate the behavior of zest.

⁷⁴ [1] “Are You Ready to Assess Social and Emotional Development? | Tools Index,” Op. cit., p. 25. [2] Dunham, M. “What Is the DESSA?” Aperture Education, February 3, 2017. <http://www.apertureed.com/dessa-overview/>

⁷⁵ “Social and Emotional Learning: Perspectives from America’s Schools,” Op. cit., p. 27.

⁷⁶ [1] Ceja, A. “KIPP Bay Area Schools.” KIPP Bay Area Schools. <http://www.kippbayarea.org/> [2] “Focus on Character.” KIPP Foundation. <http://www.kipp.org/approach/character/> [3] “TK-5 Standards Based Report Cards (SBRC).” San Francisco Public Schools. <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/curriculum-standards/report-cards.html>

⁷⁷ [1] “Is It Realistic to Include Social-Emotional Skills and Character on Report Cards?” Corwin, 2016. pp. 7–8. https://us.corwin.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/73624_Elias___Chapter_1.pdf [2] Krachman, Arnold, and Larocca, Op. cit., p. 23.

⁷⁸ “Accelerating Student Success Through High-Return Personalized Pathways.” Education Advisory Board. <https://www.eab.com/research-and-insights/community-college-executive-forum/studies/2013/reengineering-developmental-math/determining-optimal-student-mathpath/pinpoint-non-cognitive-barriers-to-attainment/teaching-character-alongside-academics>

⁷⁹ [1] “What is a Character Growth Card?” CharacterLab, p. 2. <https://www.greatschoolspartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/CharacterGrowthCard.pdf> [2] “KIPP Character Growth Card (KIPP CGC).” RAND

Figure 2.5: Sample KIPP Character Growth Card

CHARACTER STRENGTH	SELF-ASSESSMENT	AVERAGE TEACHER SCORE	TEACHER				
			1	2	3	4	5
1 = Almost Never 2 = Very Rarely 3 = Rarely 4 = Sometimes 5 = Often 6 = Very Often 7 = Almost Always							
Zest							
Actively participated							
Showed enthusiasm							
Approached new situations with excitement and energy							

Source: CharacterLab⁸⁰

PERFORMANCE TASKS

Teachers can assess student’ SEL skills through a series of simulated *performance tasks*. One web-based program, SELweb, asks students in Grades K-3 to complete tasks assessing social awareness, social meaning, social reasoning, and self-control.⁸¹ Figure 2.6 provides an overview of the SELweb performance tasks used to measure each construct. For example, to assess social awareness, students describe emotions portrayed in presented facial expressions.

Figure 2.6: Overview of SELweb Performance Tasks



Social Awareness: Students rate a set of 10 faces with different facial expressions as happy, sad, angry, scared, or just okay.



Social Meaning: Students are presented with illustrated and narrated vignettes in which a character may be disappointed, scared, sarcastic, lying, hiding feelings, or harboring a false belief. The student is then asked to correctly answer questions about the character’s mental state.



Social Reasoning: Students are presented with illustrated and narrated vignettes involving "ambiguous provocation" and "peer entry." After each vignette, students must describe the problem, social goal, and preferred solution in each story.



Self-Control: Students complete a "choice-delay task" and a "frustration-tolerance task" (e.g., games with intentional glitches built in or in which students must wait for a specific item to appear to gain the most points).

Source: Rush University Medical Center Department of Behavioral Sciences⁸²

Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/education-and-labor/projects/assessments/tool/2016/kipp-character-growth-card-kipp-cgc.html>

⁸⁰ Figure adapted from: “What is a Character Growth Card?,” Op. cit., p. 2.

⁸¹ McKown, C., N. Russo-Ponsaran, and J. Johnson. “Measuring Social-Emotional Skills to Advance Science and Practice.” Rush University Medical Center Department of Behavioral Sciences, 2016. pp. 1–2. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

⁸² Figure adapted from: [1] McKown, Russo-Ponsaran, and Johnson, “Measuring Social-Emotional Skills to Advance Science and Practice,” Op. cit., pp. 1–2, A7. [2] Curtis, J. "Assessing Social-Emotional Skills Can Be Fuzzy Work;

SELweb also features an optional module that asks students to answer questions regarding their peer relationships to provide insight into students' perceived levels of acceptance by others. After a student completes the task, teachers receive a report with scores in each area, as well as an overall SEL score. Teachers who have used data from these reports have generally found the information to be valuable for informing instruction. For example, the reports allow teachers to identify students who need more social connections or who would benefit from small-group support.⁸³

SELweb Offers Concrete Data," February 28, 2017. <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2017-02-28-assessing-social-emotional-skills-can-be-fuzzy-work-selweb-offers-concrete-data>

⁸³ Curtis, Op. cit.

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