Washington SEL Implementation Brief: For Community and Youth Development Organizations

LEARNING HAPPENS IN SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Research says that youth programs and schools that focus on creating welcoming and inclusive environments that support students' social emotional development can set youth up for long-term success and well-being. Youth programs and communities have long supported the social emotional health of young people and can continue to improve practice by being more explicit, intentional, and collaborative.

- **Learning happens in strong communities with high-quality programs**. When a positive learning community is built and high expectations are shared, students have higher attendance and better engagement.[1]
- **Learning happens by supporting the whole person.** When the intellectual and social emotional aspects of learning are integrated into high-quality programs, students are more engaged, persistent, and successful.[2]
- **Learning happens when youth feel they belong.** Youth who feel they belong are more likely to take positive risks and persevere.[3]

WHAT IS SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING?

Social emotional learning (SEL) is broadly understood as a process through which people build awareness and skills in managing emotions, setting goals, establishing relationships, and making responsible decisions that support success in school and in life. (See Washington state's SEL Implementation Guide)

SEL is **not** a way to "grade" or identify deficits, and it is not just a curriculum or add-on. Rather, SEL is an intentional approach to building student assets.

SEL supports **education equity**[4] in multiple ways: emphasizing whole-child development, drawing attention to the social nature of learning, advancing the belief that all children can learn, developing young people's skills to navigate social contexts, and improving relationships between students and educators—a key protective factor for **all** students.[5]

Washington State's SEL Standards[6]	
Self-Awareness: Individual has the ability to identify their emotions, personal assets, areas for growth, and potential external resources and supports.	**Social-Awareness:** Individual has the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
Self-Management: Individual has the ability to regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviors.	**Social Management:** Individual has the ability to make safe and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions.
Self-Efficacy: Individual has the ability to motivate themselves, persevere, and see themselves as capable.	**Social Engagement:** Individual has the ability to consider others and show a desire to contribute to the well-being of school and community.

Washington State SEL Framework and Guiding Principles

1. SEL implementation starts with capacity building.
2. SEL requires collaboration among families, educators, community partners, and young people in its design and implementation.
3. Washington State SEL is shaped by a commitment to the following four guiding principles:

Equity:
Each child receives what he or she needs to develop his or her full potential.

Culturally responsive:
Culture is viewed as a resource for learning, not a barrier.

Universal design:
Learning differences are planned for and accommodated.

Trauma-informed:
Knowledge of the effects of trauma is integrated into policy and practice.

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[1] Devaney, E. (2015). *Beyond the bell: Supporting social and emotional development through quality afterschool programs*. Retrieved from https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Social-and-Emotional-Development-Afterschool-Programs.pdf

[2] Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development, 82*(1), 405–432. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x

[3] Aspen Institute. (2019). *From a nation at risk to a nation at hope: Recommendations from the Commission of Social, Emotional, and Academic Development*. Retrieved from http://nationathope.org/wp-content/uploads/hlh1366x768.pdf

[4] Educational equity means that each child receives what he or she needs to develop to his or her full academic and social potential. Retrieved from the National Equity Project website: http://nationalequityproject.org/about/equity

[5] Jones, S. M., & Kahn, J. (2017). *The evidence base for how we learn: Supporting students' social, emotional, and academic development. Consensus statements of evidence from the Council of Distinguished Scientists*. Washington, DC: Aspen Institute.

[6] Social and Emotional Learning Benchmarks Workgroup. (2016). *Addressing social emotional learning in Washington's K–12 public schools.* Retrieved from http://www.k12.wa.us/Workgroups/SELB-Meetings/SELBWorkgroup2016Report.pdf

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"The future of our education and child-serving systems should be built upon what we now know about the development of the brain and the power of context, including the support provided to adults to construct the development."[7]

ENTRY POINTS FOR IMPROVING SEL IN COMMUNITY AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS NOW

1. **Relationships matter.** Creating a positive climate and building healthy relationships with your students that affirm their cultures and identities create the context for SEL to thrive. Review learning segment 4 of the OSPI SEL online module for educators: Integrating SEL Into Culturally Responsive Classrooms.
2. **Knowledge of current SEL work matters.** Learn about the current SEL work in Washington State by reading our SEL standards, indicators, and guiding principles, and explore ways you can meet these standards in your programs.
3. **Adult SEL matters.** Begin by developing staff SEL competencies and an understanding of equity and bias, and by reflecting on how your experiences and cultural background impact your interactions with youth.
4. **Partnerships matter.** SEL is best supported in collaboration with school and other community partners so that youth experience whole-child learning across the whole day.
5. **Quality matters**. Research shows that high-quality youth programs provide positive SEL outcomes. Review our Washington State Quality Standards for Afterschool and Youth Development Programs and use the SEL Program Quality Assessment to improve staff practices that promote SEL.
6. **Intentionality matters**. SEL happens best when it is sequenced, active, focused, and explicit. Use planning tools like CASEL's SEL Implementation Rubric.

Because all learning is inherently social and emotional, it is important for programs to improve the intentionality with which they promote SEL. Research shows that SEL programs are most effective at producing consistent outcomes when they contain four elements, summarized in the acronym SAFE:[8]

Sequenced, step-by-step approaches to building skills
Active forms of learning that require students to practice new skills
Focused time and attention specifically devoted to skill development
Explicit teaching of social emotional skills

RESOURCES FOR BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPLEMENT SEL

School-Community Partnerships
This publication is the third of several reports that explore promising practices for supporting social emotional and academic development.

Supporting Social Emotional Development Through Quality Afterschool Programs
This brief examines the research on how afterschool programs can improve the social emotional development of young people.

Preparing Youth to Thrive
This field guide helps embed SEL into any program serving teens and provides further resources.

SEL Toolkit
This toolkit from the University of Minnesota provides activities, templates, and tools to promote SEL for youth and staff.

Building Partnerships in Support of When and Where Learning Happens
Created by the National Commission's Youth Development Work Group, this brief focuses on the critical role youth development organizations play in young people's growth and development.

CASEL School and Out-of-School-Time Implementation Guide
This series of resources helps implement SEL in schools and youth programs. Look for resources specific to out-of-school time.

SEL Program Quality Assessment
This tool is used to assess and improve research-based staff practices that promote high-quality programming and SEL.

SEL Practices: A Reflection Tool for Afterschool Staff
This tool helps afterschool staff reflect on their own SEL competencies and practices.

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[7] Osher, D., Cantor, P., Berg, J., Steyer, L., & Rose, T. (2018). Drivers of human development: How relationships and context shape learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science.* Advance online publication.

[8] Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2007). The impact of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *45*(3–4), 294–309. DOI: 10.1007/s10464-010-9300-6

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