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REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Social Emotional Learning in Washington's K–12 Public Schools

2019

Authorizing legislation: ESSB 5883, Sec. 501 (31) (2017)

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Executive Summary

Social emotional learning (SEL) is broadly understood to be a process through which people build awareness and skills in managing emotions, setting goals, establishing relationships, and making responsible decisions. Research highlighted in this report demonstrates that the effective integration of SEL in school systems creates a foundation for students' increased school and life success.

The Social Emotional Learning Indicators (SELI) Workgroup was established in 2017 to build upon the work of the previous Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks (SELB) Workgroup. Committed to focusing on the whole child, the SELI Workgroup applied guiding principles to ensure that statewide SEL work promotes equity and is culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and universally designed for access by all learners.

Recommended actions for the SEL Advisory Committee (to be formed by OSPI as required in Senate Bill 5082 [2019]), each of which is dependent on meaningful engagement of diverse stakeholders, include the following:

- Intentionally enhance, communicate, and disseminate SEL implementation resources.
- Support capacity building for the implementation and integration of SEL in school systems and communities.
- Evaluate, codesign, and continually improve SEL resources and implementation efforts to ensure they are effective, aligned with community priorities, and culturally responsive.

Contents of this Report

This report contains several appendices that include both direct resources and supporting documentation. The direct resources are designed to be utilized in the development of SEL programming. The remainder of the appendices include a composite of research and other information that contributed to the development of the resources.

The direct resources (appendices B–I) include a glossary, a Practitioners' Implementation Guide, the Washington SEL Standards Benchmarks/Indicators, and Implementation Briefs focused on four specific groups: education leaders, educators, community and youth development organizations, and families. The report also includes an Implementation Brief dedicated to culturally relevant SEL.

All documents are available on the OSPI website. More detailed information about each appendix will be addressed later in this report.

Background

Focusing Social Emotional Learning on the Whole Child

Washington state defines social emotional learning (SEL) as the 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 life. Research shows that students who participate in SEL programming demonstrate increases in social emotional competencies, positive attitudes, and prosocial behaviors (Durlak et al., 2011); decreases in conduct problems, emotional distress, and substance abuse (Taylor et al., 2017); and an association between social emotional competence and post-school success, including increased rates of graduation and full-time employment by the age of 25 (Jones et al., 2015). Additionally, students who participated in SEL programs had an 11-percentile-point increase in academic achievement in the Durlak et al. (2011) study, and a 13-percentile-point increase in the Taylor et al. (2017) study, as measured by standardized test scores, compared with students who did not participate. These findings were consistent across elementary, middle, and high school, and across suburban, rural, and urban school settings.

These and related studies demonstrate the relationship between SEL and improvements in indicators of school and life success, and that students' social emotional competencies can improve in response to targeted supports in schools. Washington state has identified SEL as a key component in the provision of public education, benefiting the whole child by integrating support for the student's social, emotional, and academic development.

Washington's State-Level SEL Work

The Social Emotional Learning Indicators (SELI) Workgroup developed Washington's state-level, state-specific SEL Implementation Guide and accompanying resources using a thoughtful, continual process. This process included gathering input and ideas from diverse stakeholders **(Figure 1)**. The work began in 2015 with the development of the Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks Workgroup (SELB) which culminated in a report submitted in October of 2016 **(Appendix P)**. The current iteration of the work completed by the SELI Workgroup includes developing SEL standards, benchmarks, indicators, and the Implementation Guide. This work expanded on prior work of the SELB and aligned with Early Learning Guidelines that were established in 2012. The overall intent of this current iteration of the work was to develop and adopt a developmentally appropriate framework that could support K–12 school operation.

In addition to this iteration of the work, in 2017, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) developed a set of SEL professional development modules to enhance SEL learning for school administrators, educators, and families.

Figure 1: SEL Development in Washington State

[pre-2015]
Increasing Local and National Attention to the Importance of SEL and Its Connection to Academic Development

[2016]
OSPI Develops SEL Professional Development Modules

[June 2019]
SEL Indicators Workgroup Report Due to the Legislature

[2015]
SEL Benchmarks Workgroup Formed

[2017]
SEL Indicators Workgroup Formed
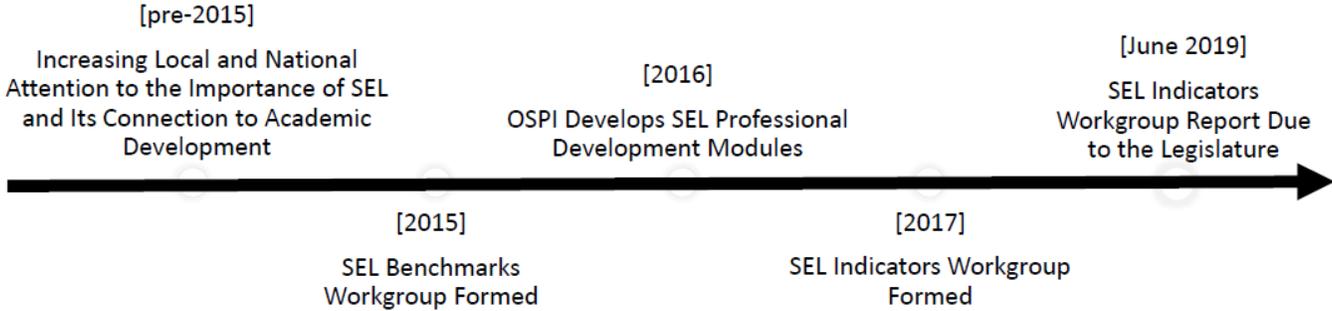
Aligning with Washington State's Early Learning and Development Guidelines

Early Learning Benchmarks were designed to help adults working with young children understand typical developmental milestones and to provide strategies and approaches for adults to help children to grow and mature in healthy ways. The original Benchmarks were designed in 2005 and updated to become the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines in 2012. The updated Guidelines focused more intentionally and specifically on the state's increasingly diverse population and on findings from childhood development research conducted after 2005. The update process included cross-cultural collaboration, additional research, and expansion from the original work with a focus on the whole child and developmentally appropriate interpersonal and decision-making knowledge and skills from K–12. The charges for the SELB and SELI Workgroups were to align the newly developed standards, benchmarks, indicators, and guidance with work that had been done to update the Early Learning Guidelines.

Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks Workgroup (2015–16)

The Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks (SELB) Workgroup was operational in 2015–16. In its final report **(Appendix Q)**, it recommended a statewide model or plan that respected local context and could be adapted to fit the needs of all schools, classrooms, teachers, and students. SELB Workgroup members were unanimous in their agreement that as Washington state's communities and workplaces grew and the state's expectations for citizenship continued to evolve, it was vital that every child be given the opportunity to develop strong interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. The SELB Workgroup also emphasized the importance of educator awareness and competency building as critical components in support of

effective SEL that is culturally responsive and rooted in positive relationships among educators, students, and their families.

SEL Learning Module

In 2016, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 6620, which directed OSPI to create an SEL learning module as part of its professional development offerings. OSPI formed the SEL Module (SELM) Advisory Committee and contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to develop the learning module.

The OSPI SEL Online Education Module has five segments:

- Introduction to SEL
- Embedding SEL School-wide
- Creating a Professional Culture Based on SEL
- Integrating SEL Into Culturally Responsive Classrooms
- Identifying and Selecting Evidence-Based SEL Programs

The module—designed for educators, administrators, school staff, other professionals, and families—is part of OSPI's professional learning offerings and can be used by educational service districts, local education agencies, and other organizations under a Creative Commons Agreement. Seven other states have adopted and adapted the module for their own use. In addition, the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) strengthened the module's impact for Washington educators by using the content to develop a competency-based, job-embedded micro-credential in SEL.

The Social Emotional Learning Indicators Workgroup

In the 2017 Operating Budget (Senate Bill 5883, Sec. 501 [31]), the Legislature provided for the establishment of the Social Emotional Learning Indicators (SELI) Workgroup. In that legislation, the Workgroup was tasked with the following:

1. Build on the work that was begun by the SELB Workgroup.
2. Solicit feedback from stakeholders.
3. Identify and articulate developmental indicators for each grade level under each benchmark.
4. Develop a model of best practices or guidance for schools on implementing the benchmarks and indicators.

The SELI Workgroup was charged with submitting this report and these recommendations to the state legislature and the Office of the Governor by June 30, 2019.

Funding

Four separate sources of funding supported the work culminating in this report, including:

- The Washington State Legislature.
- The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- Federal technical assistance funds through the Center for Great Teachers.
- Federal technical assistance funds through the Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest (REL Northwest).

In the 2017 Operating Budget (ESSB 5883, Sec. 501 [31]), the Legislature provided $200,000 to support the work of the SELI Workgroup. OSPI recognized the need for a dedicated full-time employee as well as substantial expert technical assistance to meet the Legislature's charge. The agency sought additional grant funding to fulfill these needs.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation awarded a one-time grant for two years totaling $200,000. Through this investment, they provided a path for garnering necessary resources and expertise to expand the Workgroup's knowledge of social emotional development. The Foundation's intent was for OSPI to work with contractors to access the necessary information in the creation of quality SEL indicators and implementation guidance. OSPI used the funds from the Gates Foundation to contract with and obtain technical assistance, research, and developmental support from AIR and Education Northwest (EdNW). These contractors provided support with community outreach, statewide and national scans regarding SEL development and programming, and significant literature and research specific to SEL development. Without this combination of multiple funding streams, OSPI would not have been able to have fully staffed the position and make possible two years of comprehensive and extensive work by SELI Workgroup members committed to developing SEL in Washington state.

Research Supporting SEL Development in Washington

Statewide Scan: The SEL Landscape in Washington State

OSPI contracted with EdNW to conduct a landscape scan of SEL activities across the State of Washington in the fall of 2018 **(Appendix K)**. The purpose of this landscape scan was to provide a snapshot of the SEL work taking place and to identify emerging issues and trends related to SEL in Washington. The scan was designed in consultation with SELI Workgroup members and OSPI staff to provide additional, systematically collected data to supplement and complement efforts by the Workgroup. The scan included a document review and a

statewide survey of school districts (*n*=168). Interviews and focus groups with 37 individuals provided more insight and contextualized information about SEL activities, needs, and issues across the state. Over the course of two meetings, EdNW presented emerging findings to SELI Workgroup members and facilitated discussions regarding implications for their work.

Key findings included the following:

The landscape scan revealed that SEL in Washington state is not uncommon; however, it is inconsistently defined in K–12 education. Findings indicated growing interest in SEL among educators and other stakeholders, with multiple definitions and approaches in use. Many districts address SEL in their mission, goals, and strategic plans, yet few have adopted SEL-specific policies or procedures. About two-thirds of surveyed districts engage in activities to support student SEL, and almost all surveyed districts actively work to improve school climate.

This finding emphasizes the need for a common framework to bolster SEL efforts statewide, a summary of evidence demonstrating how SEL supports core education goals, and procedural guidance to help districts and schools implement SEL.

A shared framework for SEL in K–12 education is not yet in use across Washington state. The absence of a common language and framework was cited as a barrier to implementation. Fewer than half of the surveyed districts used the limited OSPI resources to support their SEL activities, and about one-third of interview and focus group participants suggested that widely used SEL language and frameworks do not yet resonate with culturally diverse communities. The growing practice of understanding student-level SEL may be challenging, given the dynamic state of the research and questions about the cultural responsiveness of indicators.

This finding reinforces the need for implementation guidance that accentuates cultural diversity and supports implementation with resources that are public and accessible.

Landscape scan participants commonly reported that school staff members, families, and community partners all have a role to play in promoting SEL. The SELI Workgroup was very intentional in ensuring that the implementation guidance it produced was both accessible and relevant for all adults in a position to support student SEL. The Workgroup also created briefs customized for various adults (e.g., education leaders, educators, youth workers, and families).

The quality and depth of SEL implementation is uneven, with more professional development and guidance needed across the state. The SELI Workgroup embraced the mission of putting helpful resources into the hands of educators so they can implement SEL and create more consistent access to SEL practices and programming for students across the state. The SELI Workgroup

recommends that efforts be made to ensure all communities have access to SEL resources, including in rural and remote locations.

Many participants highlighted the need for a systems approach and strategic investments in infrastructure to support quality SEL at the state, district, and school levels. The SELI Workgroup reinforced its commitment to creating an SEL implementation guide with parents and families (as well as educators) in mind; advocated for cross-collaboration between OSPI and other state agencies; and considered the approaches of other states in developing indicators and resources.

The scan found that many districts in Washington state are monitoring progress in initiatives related to SEL via school climate measures, classroom practice measures, and aggregated student outcome measures. Slightly more than half of the districts in the scan reported using student surveys, staff surveys, or classroom observations to monitor progress in SEL.

The Washington SEL Implementation Guide includes special considerations related to SEL and SEL-related data. It also provides guidance on using data to monitor the effectiveness of practices, programs, and policies in a continuous quality improvement process. The Washington SEL Standards, Benchmarks, and Indicators and the SEL Implementation Guide also strongly caution that SEL indicators are not to be used to assess or label students, but to indicate developmental progressions that inform instructional strategies that help students to grow and mature.

National Scan: SEL Environment and Other States' SEL Efforts

To support the efforts of the SELI Workgroup, OSPI also contracted with AIR to conduct a national environmental scan of existing state-level SEL standards and implementation guides and provide a written overview of their findings **(Appendix L)**. OSPI wanted the members of the SELI Workgroup to have access to SEL resources developed by other states (and one province) that could inform their decision-making processes, provide models for expanding the systemic work started by previous workgroups and advisory boards, assist them in maintaining the state's already integrated focus on culturally responsive practices and equity, and address all aspects of the legislative charge. Among the states that have developed both SEL standards and SEL implementation guidance, the SEL standards articulate learning objectives at the student level, while the implementation guidance documents mostly provide intentional strategies that shape contexts (the school or classroom).

States consistently indicated the need to integrate SEL into district and school continuous improvement processes and align it cohesively with other initiatives. Implementation guidance provided multiple ways to integrate SEL into the school day, including direct teacher strategies

in support of specific competencies, integration of SEL with academic learning, supporting teachers' social and instructional practices that generally promote both academic and social emotional learning, and implementing evidence-based programs.

Community Outreach: Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback

SELI Workgroup members conducted community outreach sessions and gathered both input and feedback from diverse stakeholders through facilitated conversations at multiple points during their process. The information is summarized in **Appendix J**. The stakeholder engagement mechanisms and discussion questions employed slightly different protocols for each group. Stakeholders also provided feedback on draft documents.

Key Themes from Community Outreach Efforts

Common themes emerged from 19 community outreach and stakeholder engagement sessions, direct feedback on documents, public comments at Workgroup meetings, and an online survey administered by OSPI in both English and Spanish (n=529). Intentional efforts were made to include as many diverse perspectives as possible. Tribal representation through the Affiliated Tribes for Northwest Indians (ATNI) and the three Washington State Ethic Commissions (Asian/Pacific American, Hispanic, and African American) were engaged in facilitated conversations and a review of documents to assess for cultural responsiveness.

SEL should be community connected and adapted. By collaborating closely with families, community-based organizations, and tribes, schools can design, plan, and implement SEL approaches that fit the local culture and context. Multi-language SEL materials for families is one resource to support this work.

SEL involves adult learning and unlearning. Effective SEL requires adults to shift their mindsets, skills, and behaviors to model SEL and promote equity and inclusion for all students. Schools need resources and guidance so SEL efforts do not perpetuate inequalities, and staff need support for their own learning and wellness.

Quality SEL requires investments of training and time, yet schools are juggling competing priorities and limited resources. Schools and districts need to ensure staff receive pre-service training and ongoing, job-embedded professional learning related to SEL; adequate time to plan, teach, and integrate SEL; and time to collaborate across roles (e.g., counselors and teachers) to better support students. Key training needs include culturally responsive SEL, SEL for secondary students, and engaging families in SEL.

Schools need guidance on SEL integration and alignment. This includes integration and alignment of SEL with academics, school policies (e.g., student-centered and restorative approaches to discipline), and practices (e.g., trauma-informed practices). SEL should be woven throughout the school and supported by diverse staff members. Resources, examples, and tools are needed.

Stakeholders define SEL in a variety of ways, including (but not limited to) skills. Stakeholders described both interpersonal (e.g., conflict resolution, communication) and intrapersonal (e.g., identity, belonging) aspects of development within the context of supportive environments (e.g., student-teacher relationships). They viewed SEL as important and identified multiple benefits of SEL for students, adults, and communities. Many stakeholders emphasized the diversity of SEL expression and experiences across individuals and groups. They indicated mixed opinions and for some, concern, related to whether and how SEL might be used to assess students.

These stakeholder considerations were intentionally incorporated into the following SELI Workgroup recommendations and next actions to support SEL in Washington state.

SEL and Equity: Current Issues and Considerations

OSPI contracted with EdNW in the development of an equity brief **(Appendix M)**. There is a growing sense of urgency regarding the need to examine SEL in relation to issues of equity in K–12 education. For example, a recent cultural analysis of SEL questioned whether the prevalent frameworks, programs, and assessments adequately reflect, cultivate, and leverage cultural assets and promote the well-being of youth of color and those from under-resourced backgrounds. This brief draws on diverse sources (research articles, presentations, blog posts, policy reports) to summarize the dialogue on this issue and offer considerations on equity for the SEL Workgroup in the design of a statewide SEL framework, implementation guide, and indicators.

Annotated Bibliographies

Evidence Basis for SEL **(Appendix N)**: OSPI contracted with AIR to identify relevant literature to begin the work. It takes into account the complexities of SEL development and focuses on literature pertinent to the way in which OSPI had defined SEL. Although not a comprehensive or systematic review of all related literature, this scan provided the SELI Workgroup an introduction to literature that provides the evidence for the basis of SEL.

Key Points from Evidence Basis for SEL

Development of social and emotional competencies occurs throughout the lifespan (Jones & Kahn, 2017).

- Social, emotional, and behavioral competencies develop simultaneously as part of an ongoing change process; individuals are shaped by their social contexts, which, in turn, are also shaped by individuals and their interactions (Lerner, 2006).
- Specific grade-level or age-related developmental competency definitions are difficult to assign; social and emotional development's "nature" is complex and non-linear.
- Based on the research, AIR categorized the annotated articles into one of two developmental periods: middle childhood (ages 6–11) or adolescence (ages 12–18); these two periods roughly align with the age range for students in grades K–12 (6–18 years old).
- AIR did not conduct a comprehensive or systematic review of all related literature; rather, AIR focused the scan on Washington state's definition of SEL.

WA SEL Standards and Benchmarks **(Appendix O):** Also created by AIR, this document identified literature related to Washington state's six standards and 17 benchmarks from the Addressing Social Emotional Learning in Washington's K-12 Public Schools – October 2016 Report **(Appendix Q)**. The intention was to inform and assist the SELI Workgroup in aligning benchmarks in accordance with the literature and to assist them in creating developmentally appropriate indicators. AIR used a developmental lens to look closely at each one of the six competencies and focused on providing the following: an introduction to relevant literature, terminology that reflects alignment with the existing literature base, and the extensive mismatch that exists between frameworks and the terms defining social and emotional competencies (Berg et al., 2017) that need to be considered carefully when developing SEL standards, benchmarks, and indicators.

Reference List for Developing SEL Indicators **(Appendix P):** AIR created this for the SELI Workgroup to identify specific research and literature to begin the process of developing indicators for each of Washington's SEL benchmarks. Additional literature and expert consultation were engaged to address questions and gaps as the Workgroup began to develop the indicators.

SELI Workgroup Accomplishments (2017–19)

SELI Activities

Social Emotional Learning Indicators (SELI) Workgroup members represent diverse experiences and contexts and include school administrators, psychologists, counselors, social workers, and educators; parent and family organizations; early childhood and youth advocates; divisions and commissions in the governor's office; and tribal leaders (see **Appendix A** for a list of Workgroup membership). The SELI Workgroup met monthly from September 2017 through June 2019. During this time, the Workgroup and contractors

reviewed previous work and recommendations, generated questions to inform its work, and gathered information from local, state, and national SEL experts to answer questions such as:

- To what extent is SEL currently being implemented in Washington?
- How is SEL currently being implemented in Washington?
- How are other states implementing SEL?
- What approaches, models, competencies, and best practices are other states implementing?
- What criteria and rationale(s) did other states use to determine the approaches, models, competencies, and best practices they implemented?

OSPI provided research and facilitation support to the SELI Workgroup throughout the process.

SELI Workgroup Subcommittees

To address the goals formulated by the Workgroup efficiently and within the designated time provided by the Legislature, the SELI Workgroup divided into three subcommittees focused on the following components of the work: framework, indicators, and the implementation guide.

Framework Subcommittee

The Framework Subcommittee was primarily responsible for aligning components of SEL resource development (including the already developed SEL online module) to create a cohesive set of resources for professional learning that prepare adults to operationalize the work. The Subcommittee considered the big picture, thinking about how to provide consistent framing or a common structure, model, or plan of a larger SEL effort, of which the standards, benchmarks, and indicators for student learning are just one component. Subcommittee members approached the social emotional development of children and youth as a shared responsibility among families, educators, advocates for children, youth development professionals, community partners, and other organizations.

To visualize the approach for Washington state's proposed SEL model or plan, the Subcommittee developed the graphic shown in Figure 1, which illustrates the conditions needed to support SEL in collaboration with families and communities, with shared responsibility for ongoing SEL development and a focus on equity, cultural responsiveness, trauma-informed practices, and universal design for learning. It also illustrates the SELI Workgroup's emphasis on building adult capacity (awareness, attitudes, and skills) to create engaging and inclusive learning environments with positive youth-adult relationships that

support SEL, academic progress, and positive life outcomes for youth.

Figure 2: A Community-Wide Vision for Social Emotional Learning
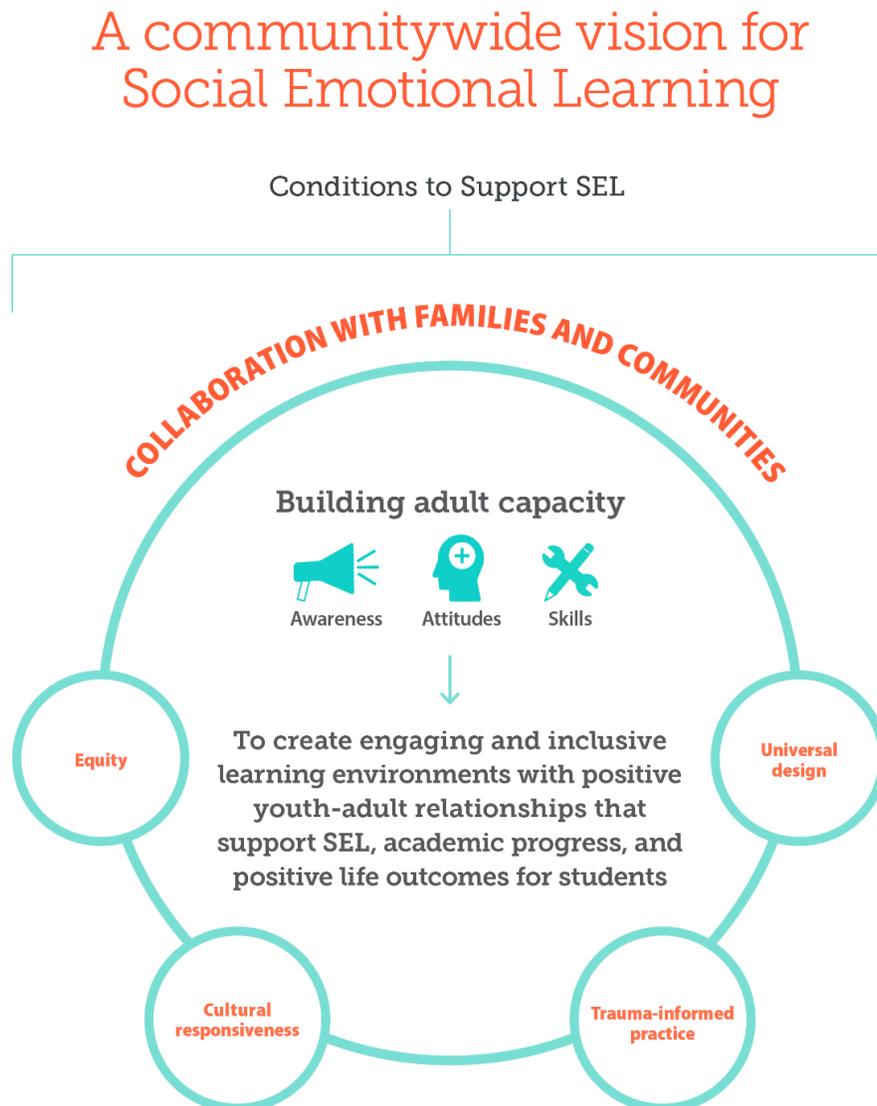
A communitywide vision for Social Emotional Learning

Conditions to Support SEL

COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Building adult capacity

Awareness   Attitudes   Skills

To create engaging and inclusive learning environments with positive youth-adult relationships that support SEL, academic progress, and positive life outcomes for students

Equity

Universal design

Cultural responsiveness

Trauma-informed practice

Indicators Subcommittee

The Indicators Subcommittee expanded on the work completed by the previous Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks (SELB) Workgroup by defining the term "indicators," extensively reviewing literature and research on developmental benchmarks for K–12 students **(Appendices N, O, and P)**, and creating student indicators of SEL as part of the legislative mandate.

According to the Indicators Subcommittee, the purpose of the Standards, Benchmarks, and Indicators is to provide a scaffolded framework identifying observable developmental benchmarks for learners. This work was premised on Subcommittee knowledge that educators benefit from clear definitions of skills and dispositions articulating how learners develop. Subcommittee members studied the literature and organized developmentally appropriate indicators according to grade bands (early elementary, late elementary, middle school, and high school/adult) rather than individual grade levels. Research on social and emotional development is complex and nonlinear, and therefore it is difficult to assign a concrete definition of a developmental competency to a specific grade or age. Most research that was reviewed defined social and emotional competencies within broad developmental periods rather than by grade level. This is expected because developmental literature concerns children across settings, not just in school. This approach was also advised by several educators who provided feedback during development of the indicators.

As indicated above, SEL development is not a linear process and the indicators intentionally span a continuum of behaviors that can fluctuate based on a wide range of internal and environmental conditions, and educators are encouraged to differentiate supports and modifications accordingly. The Indicators Subcommittee recognized the highly individual nature of social emotional development, and that observing a learner's behavior in relation to the indicators can lead to constructive conversations among educators as well as with learners and their families.

Implementation Guide Subcommittee

The Implementation Guide Subcommittee was primarily responsible for providing foundational information and content on implementation, staff preparation, supportive adult SEL practices, contexts and environments that promote SEL, approaches to SEL implementation, and an overall structure or model for Washington's SEL framework. The Subcommittee decided to focus on school-level sites and school-wide implementation because they felt it was the point of greatest potential impact, particularly because of Washington's emphasis on community-wide SEL. Schools are well positioned to engage community partners and families in a collaborative approach to creating an SEL implementation plan that is

responsive and embedded in the cultures that communities represent.

Development of the Briefs

As the Workgroup continued to amass information that would be relevant to SEL implementation in both schools and communities, there was a realization that it could be perceived as overwhelming and difficult to navigate. The Implementation Subcommittee recommended the creation of briefs that were targeted to specific groups who would be most likely implementers of SEL programming. Those four groups were education leaders **(Appendix E)**, educators **(Appendix F)**, parents and families **(Appendix G)**, and community and youth development organizations **(Appendix H)**.

Development of Standards, Benchmarks, and Indicators

The development of the Standards, Benchmarks and Indicators **(Appendix C)** was one of the mandated deliverables of the legislation. After reviewing the literature in the Annotated Bibliographies, Versions 1 and 2 **(Appendices N and O),** information gathered in both the State and National Scans **(Appendices K and L)**, and Stakeholder Feedback **(Appendix J)** the SELI Workgroup turned to the task of defining developmental indicators. The following questions emerged during discussions:

- Are the Indicators based on research and are they developmentally appropriate for the designated grade range?
- Is there a risk that the SEL Standards, Benchmarks, and Indicators may further marginalize students of color, students with disabilities, or students who have experienced trauma?
- Will the SEL Standards, Benchmarks, and Indicators actualize a white, middle-class set of values and reinforce other students' sense that they are outsiders within their school community?

Although it was not the intent of the Workgroup, it warranted a very intentional and careful examination. Therefore, the SELI Workgroup established their goals as follows:

1. Create a state-level SEL model for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, educational service districts, school districts, families, students, and community partners to help guide and support implementation efforts that consider the context for SEL in terms of building adult SEL capacity and creating environments that support student SEL.

2. Create an implementation guide for people working with children and youth (grades K–12) that is culturally responsive, equitable, trauma-informed, and universally designed.

3. Create indicators for people working with children and youth (grades K–12) that are culturally responsive, developmentally appropriate, equitable, and trauma-informed.

4. Provide concrete recommendations to move SEL work and implementation forward.

Developing the Washington SEL Implementation Guide

The Washington SEL Implementation Guide is designed specifically for schools and communities in Washington. The proposed approach recognizes that different localities will implement evidence-based, equity-focused SEL in a way that meets the needs of their own students. The Implementation Guide provides essential guidance and state-level leadership to ensure that although communities may start with adult readiness, the focus remains on partnership between families and schools, and the work integrates the four guiding principles of equity, cultural responsiveness, universal design for learning, and trauma-informed practice. These guiding principles support an integrated approach to SEL and reflect leading research in the field that documents the following three targeted outcomes:

- Increased social emotional competencies in adults and children that reflect the diversity of communities (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018).
- More positive relationships between children and adults and among the various adults that support children (Berg et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2017).
- More positive environments that support children's learning in and out of school (Durlak et al., 2010; Durlak & Weissberg, 2013; Jones et al., 2017).

As positive relationships and social emotional competencies increase, Washington can expect to see improvements across various indicators of school health and student success:

- An increase in student attendance and academic outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017).
- A decrease in overall behavior referrals in schools (Osher & Berg, 2017).
- An increase in student resilience (Cantor et al., 2018; Thompson, 2014).
- An increase in educator well-being and job satisfaction (Greenberg et al., 2016).
- Improved public health (Greenberg et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2015; Jones et al., 2017).

- An increase in the number of students attaining a high school diploma, a college degree, and a full-time job (Jones et al., 2015).
- A workforce that meets the needs of employers (National Network of Business and Industry Associations, 2014; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2016).

Using the Resources and Getting Started

Many individuals struggle with the question, "Where do I begin to put SEL strategies in motion?" **Appendices C–I** are the documents that are the direct resources to be used by school leaders, educators, community and youth development workers, and parents and families in developing an understanding of SEL. Through their unique lenses, these individuals can become aware of activities and strategies they might consider to bolster SEL for themselves and for their students.

For the individual just starting out, it's important to determine their own role and to begin with one of the four briefs **(Appendices E, F, G, H, and I)** corresponding with their role: school leader, educator, community/youth development worker, or parents and families to ground themselves in an understanding from those perspectives. Each brief contains an introduction to SEL, key entry points for implementation, broad based ideas to promote SEL, and links to resources. It is also advised that individuals read the briefs from other disciplines to also gain an understanding from another perspective. A fifth brief provides information on applying SEL through a culturally responsive lens, one of the principles of Washington's SEL development and something that is beneficial for all disciplines.

After becoming familiar with the briefs, the reader may want to peruse the Washington SEL Implementation Guide **(Appendix C),** which provides a broad and detailed overview covering the following topics:

- SEL is a Shared Responsibility.
- What is Washington's SEL Guide?
- Why is Social Emotional Learning Important?
- Why does it Matter for Washington Students?
- How can we Implement SEL in Our School and Community?
- Where to Start: School and Community Readiness to Implement.
- Breakdown of the Guiding Principles.
- Building Adult Capacity.
- Creating Conditions to Support Students' SEL.
- Collaboration with Families and Communities.

Specific observations to look for in order to better understand student SEL development and competency building can be found in the Standards, Benchmarks, and Indicators **(Appendix D).** It provides the detail, across grade bands, on developmental milestones that educators can use to understand the progression of competencies for specific students. This document can be put in better context after becoming familiar with the briefs and the Washington SEL Implementation Guide.

The document can be useful across various roles:

Educators can use this document to reference developmentally appropriate examples of student SEL corresponding to specific standards and benchmarks, and therefore inform their instruction to aid student development.

School and district administrators will find value in this document as they support the instructional efforts of their staff and develop systems that embed and support SEL within and across school buildings.

Families and communities can be empowered to partner in their children's school-based social emotional development and also be supported in their SEL at home by understanding the SEL standards, benchmarks, and indicators that pertain to their child.

Students can be empowered and encouraged to use their own voice to the greatest extent possible in taking charge of their own social emotional development, as it relates to their own personal learning and development of goals and strategies.

Next Actions

Next actions for OSPI in implementing Senate Bill 5082 (2019) include:

- Creating a defined state-level SEL committee to promote and expand SEL.
- Reviewing and adopting SEL standards and benchmarks and revising them as needed.
- Aligning the programs the agency oversees with the standards for SEL and integrating the standards where appropriate.
- Creating and publishing on its website a list of resources available for professional development on specified topics (e.g. SEL, Trauma Informed Practice, Model Plans for Emotional & Behavioral Distress, etc.).

Recommendations

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Social Emotional Learning Indicators (SELI) Workgroup make the following recommendations for the Legislature and

the Governor to fund, support, and sustain the following actions for OSPI and the SEL Advisory Committee:

Action 1: Enhance, promote, and disseminate Washington SEL resources.

Action 2: Build capacity for the implementation and integration of SEL in schools, families, and communities.

Action 3: Evaluate, co-design, and promote continuous quality improvement of SEL resources and implementation efforts to ensure that they are effective, aligned with community priorities, and culturally responsive.

These actions are intended to be pursued simultaneously and in an ongoing manner; each with focused consideration and engagement of diverse stakeholder groups including students, educators, families, and community partners and interest groups as outlined in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Student-Centered and Family-Affirming SEL
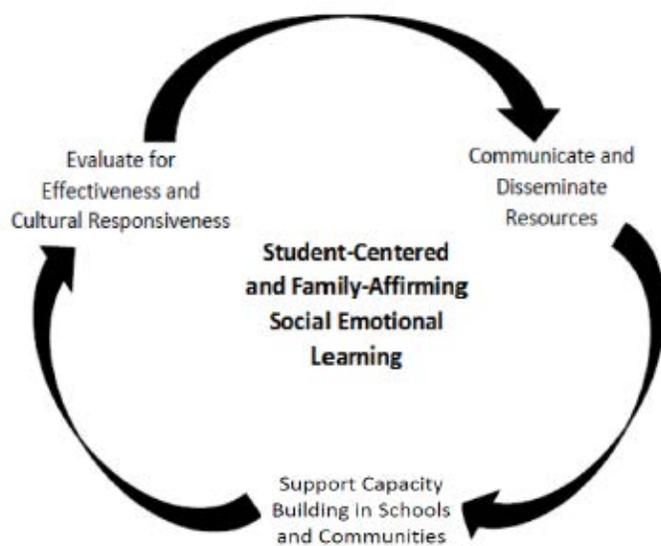
Action 1: Support enhancement, promotion, and dissemination of Washington SEL resources.

OSPI and the SEL Advisory Committee, with support and funding from the Legislature, should prioritize the following activities:

- Gather and utilize stakeholder feedback to inform the ongoing **enhancement** of state-developed resources, ensuring they are thoughtfully designed to promote equity, are trauma-informed, are culturally sustaining, and incorporate the principles of universal design to ensure accessibility for all learners.
- Develop a **dissemination** plan to maximize educators' use of the SEL Standards, Benchmarks, and Indicators; SEL Implementation Guide; online learning module; other Washington state-developed resources; and vetted external resources that align with the statewide SEL framework.
- Accompany resources with focused **communication** efforts tailored for educators, families, students, and community stakeholders, emphasizing the role of SEL in addressing the needs of the whole child while considering various forms of SEL expression and experience.

Action 2: With legislative support and funding, OSPI and the SEL Advisory Committee should sustain capacity building for the implementation and integration of SEL in schools and communities.

- Support **education systems and leaders** in SEL implementation by promoting identification and cross-sharing of effective and evidence-based SEL practices across the state, system-level integration of SEL with other child-centered and equity-promoting initiatives, organization of SEL practices within tiered systems of student supports and school climate efforts, consideration of context and evidence when choosing SEL programming, and alignment of SEL within a systemic continuous improvement process.
- Support **teachers, school staff, and extended learning opportunity staff** to promote students' development of social emotional competencies while developing their own social emotional competencies and capacity to create inclusive and equitable learning environments. Promote educator practices connected to SEL indicators through professional learning experiences that are ongoing, job-embedded, collaborative, based on adult learning principles, and aligned with teacher quality frameworks.
- Support **students and their families** by engaging them in the design, implementation, and evaluation of SEL efforts to ensure that efforts honor family identity and build on their cultural and family assets. Identify learning opportunities and resources designed for families that provide background information on SEL, evidence related to specific social emotional competencies, and strategies for supporting SEL at home.
- Support **whole communities** by identifying strategies to improve coordination and integration of SEL between early learning, K–12 education, higher education, youth-serving community partners, culturally and community-based providers, other public agencies, and stakeholder groups.

Action 3: With legislative support and funding, OSPI and the SEL Advisory Committee should maintain the evaluation, co-design, and continuous quality improvement of Washington's SEL resources and implementation efforts to ensure they are effective, aligned with community priorities, and culturally responsive.

- Support efforts for the SEL Advisory Committee to evaluate and apply, as appropriate, apply ethical and culturally appropriate **data systems** to collect information about SEL and monitor implementation efforts, using a strengths-based approach to continuous improvement that focuses on adult capacities, practices, and learning settings, rather than assessing students.
- Support the engagement of **diverse stakeholders** to evaluate existing SEL resources and efforts and identify, co-design, and co-develop additional resources with the state-

level committee to ensure a community-connected and culturally responsive approach to statewide SEL.

- In addition to the Focus on Culturally Responsive Practices brief **(Appendix I),** develop additional implementation briefs focused on the **guiding principles** informing statewide SEL development to further support stakeholder understanding of equity, universal design for learning, and trauma-informed practices, and their relevance to the implementation of SEL.

Conclusion

The Social Emotional Learning Indicators (SELI) Workgroup has successfully completed:

- The addition of developmentally appropriate and observable student indicators of SEL to the Washington SEL standards and benchmarks.

- The creation of SEL implementation guidance for educators in the form of the Washington SEL Implementation Guide and accompanying briefs.

- A compilation of recommendations to sustain, support, and continue work in the development of SEL in Washington state.

There remains a considerable amount of work to be accomplished for a fully functional, statewide SEL framework across the state.

The SELI Workgroup submits to the Legislature an expanded version of the SEL framework, including learning standards, benchmarks, and developmental student indicators that provide educators with observable developmental milestones to inform teaching and learning. Accompanying the newly developed student indicators is an extensive implementation guide to further support educators in their integration of SEL. Both the indicators and the implementation guide were developed to support SEL implementation that promotes equity, is culturally responsive, is trauma-informed, and adheres to principles of universal design to ensure accessibility for all learners. This work was accomplished through an evolving process that intentionally incorporated extensive feedback from diverse stakeholders. The SELI Workgroup recommends the adoption of the newly-created resources and continued resourcing of a state-level SEL committee to further the work.

The SELI Workgroup's findings and stakeholder feedback also point to focused actions for the next state-level SEL committee, reflecting an important transition from design phases to support for systemic implementation of SEL across the state. Further work—in the form of dissemination of resources, capacity-building for implementation, and continual evaluation of SEL efforts—is necessary to ensure the developed framework takes root in Washington's schools in ways that positively impact students and the adults who support them.

Washington's students deserve optimal preparation for success, including the social emotional competencies necessary to excel and be well in school, career, and life. The SELI Workgroup appreciates the opportunity to participate in the development of these essential supports for students and their educators in partnership with families, schools, and communities across the state of Washington.

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