



Memo

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To: Ron Hertel, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
Mona Johnson, OSPI

CC: OSPI Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Workgroup

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Re: National SEL Environment Scan: Review of Other States' SEL Efforts

Introduction

Social and emotional learning (SEL) has emerged as a critical ingredient for student success in schools (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017). Multiple states and districts are making strategic efforts to support student social and emotional development. For example, 25 states are now involved in the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Collaborating States Initiative (CSI), and over 20 districts are now involved in CASEL's Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI). Through these efforts, 14 states have now articulated SEL competencies or standards for prekindergarten through Grade 12 (although not all states have developmental indicators), and 14 states have SEL implementation tools and guidance documents. An additional seven states have SEL supports on their webpages that link to external implementation supports (Dusenbury, Dermody, & Weissberg, 2018).

In 2017, Washington state legislature charged the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to build upon the already existing SEL efforts of Washington State. Among other tasks, the legislature charged OSPI to convene an SEL workgroup to create developmental indicators that align with OSPI's SEL Standards and Benchmarks, as well as an implementation guidance document that builds upon and from the OSPI SEL online modules. To support these efforts, OSPI requested that AIR staff conduct a national environmental scan of existing state-level SEL standards/competencies and state-level SEL implementation guides. In this memo, we provide an overview of what other states have included, first in their SEL standards/competencies, and second in their implementation guides to support SEL standards/competencies.

SEL Competencies or Standards Review

States have increasingly adopted SEL as a means to support children in developing the critical intrapersonal and interpersonal skills necessary to thrive in school, the workplace, and life. As SEL has gained popularity as an evidence-based intervention, states have begun to adopt SEL standards (sometimes referred to as SEL competencies or SEL learning goals), benchmarks, and developmental indicators to assist in guiding implementation. States develop SEL standards to create developmentally appropriate learning goals and to form a common language around social and emotional development that educators across a state can use (Yoder & Dusenbury, 2017). Although states are eager for SEL standards, they are creating developmental indicators somewhat faster than the developmentally aligned frameworks in the research literature (Berg et al., 2017). As such, states are using the research literature across multiple SEL frameworks to provide the best available guidance to educators, while recognizing that more research and refinement is needed regarding the frameworks developed. Furthermore, the adoption of standards is not intended to respond to policymakers' desire to "standardize" SEL. Rather, the intention is to provide guidance on the ways that social and emotional competencies develop over time. In fact, given the complexity of social and emotional development, standardizing SEL is likely impossible; individuals express their social and emotional competencies differently according to their individual age, culture, and context. The adoption of standards, however, provides educators guidance on what social and emotional competencies could look like as individuals grow and change in a culturally responsive manner inside and outside of the school context.

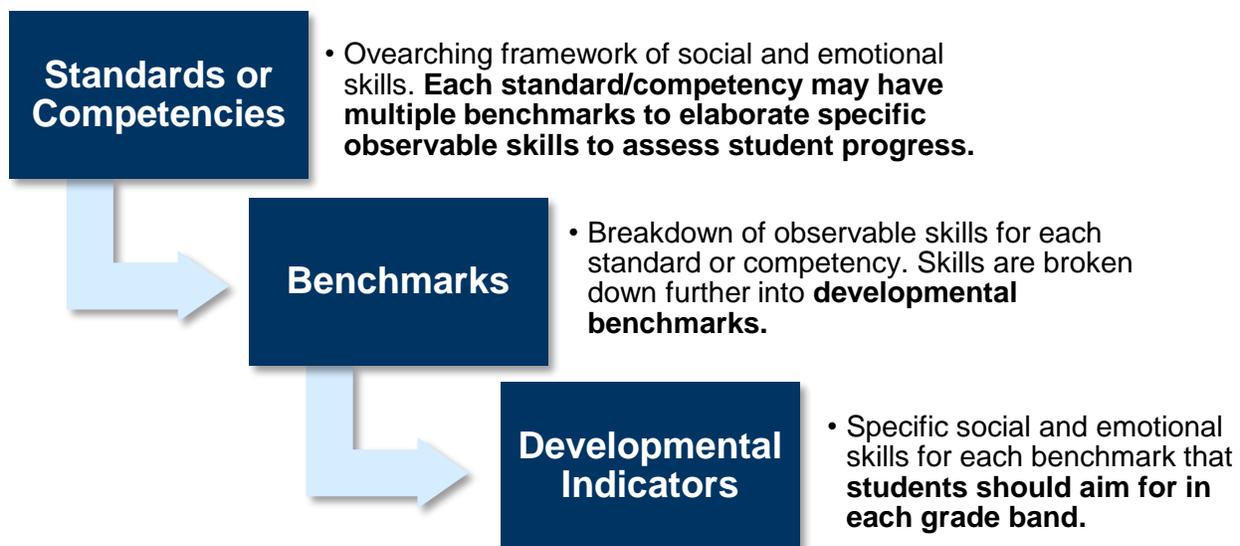
In the following section, we describe the standards, benchmarks, and developmental indicators that states developed to guide implementation of SEL in districts and schools. Specifically, we review which domains of social and emotional development state education agencies chose to include within their standards/competencies, including what standards look like as well as how standards, benchmarks, and indicators are articulated developmentally. Of the 14 states that developed social and emotional standards/competencies for Grades K–12, 10 states created grade-banded competencies: Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, North Dakota, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.¹ For the purposes of this review (based on the needs of OSPI and their charge to create developmental indicators), AIR staff reviewed those 10 states that have grade-banded competencies. In addition, the province of British Columbia in Canada articulates developmental social and emotional competencies, and we also included their standards in this review.

¹ New Jersey, Nevada, Rhode Island, and Washington State have K–12 SEL standards or competencies but do not include developmental indicators currently.

SEL Domains Selected by States

Student social and emotional competencies consist of the skills, knowledge and attitudes that support students' ability to identify and regulate emotions, form meaningful relationships, and make responsible decisions. (CASEL, 2018a). State-level SEL standards/competencies reflect clear goals for student social and emotional development over time (Yoder & Dusenbury, 2017). Typically, SEL standards/competencies are composed of three layers: (1) overarching "standards" or "competencies," (2) benchmarks, and (3) developmental indicators (see Figure 1). Of the 11 states and Canadian province that AIR staff reviewed, West Virginia is the only state that did not include all three levels. West Virginia included overarching standards and developmental indicators; they did not include the second level (benchmarks).

Figure 1. Structure of SEL Standards



Note. This figure was adapted with permission from Yoder and Dusenbury (2017).

Learning Goals or Competencies

Of the 11 states and province that AIR staff reviewed, eight states adapted or directly adopted CASEL's five core competencies (CASEL, 2018a) to guide the creation of state-level standards and benchmarks. The CASEL framework outlines five essential competencies, which include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The framework is well supported by evidence from many fields, including prevention science, psychology, social work, and education (Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015; Zins & Elias, 2006). Of the eight states² that adopted or adapted the CASEL framework, four states adopted the framework as is, and four states organized the competencies into three goals: (a) intrapersonal or personal development (self-awareness and self-management),

² Although states did not explicitly work together to develop their SEL standards/competencies, most of the states referenced the work of other states during their development.

- (b) interpersonal or social development (social awareness and relationships skills), and
- (c) responsible decision-making (or character development in the case of Kansas).

The other two states and one province used a variety of methods to develop their competencies. Wisconsin adapted their prekindergarten standards. In other words, they started with their prekindergarten standards and identified how those social and emotional competencies developed over time. Once Wisconsin developed their PreK to Grade 12 SEL competencies, they aligned their PreK to Grade 12 SEL competencies to the CASEL core competencies. Maine worked with the Educational Policy Improvement Center to develop four SEL-related domains (or standards): clear and effective communicator, self-directed and lifelong learner, responsible and involved citizen, and integrative and informed thinker. British Columbia worked with teachers across 20 districts to develop their draft core competencies. Their framework incorporates six core competencies: communication, creative thinking, critical thinking, positive personal and cultural identity, personal awareness and responsibility, and social responsibility.

A key component of developing standards, benchmarks, and developmental indicators is ensuring that they are culturally responsive, trauma informed, and connected with other important efforts within states (Dusenbury & Yoder, 2017). CASEL conducted an analysis of eight states' SEL standards/competencies and whether they were culturally responsive, trauma informed, and connected with other efforts (see Figure 2 for a summary; CASEL 2018b). In their analysis, CASEL found that states aligned their SEL standards to the following efforts (recognizing that this is not an exhaustive list of efforts that states can align their SEL efforts to):

- whole child efforts (four states),
- mental health and trauma (seven states),
- college and career readiness (five states),
- school climate (seven states),
- character (one state),
- equity and diversity (five states),
- multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) (four states), and
- positive behavioral interventions and supports (three states).

Connections and alignment look different depending on the state education agency. For example, states focus on equity by having cultural competence experts review their SEL standards to ensure they were written in a way that reflected cultural diversity (e.g., Michigan and Minnesota), while other states include a guidance document on how to implement SEL in a culturally competent way (e.g., Minnesota and Massachusetts). In addition, states connect their academic standards with their SEL standards/competencies through alignment documents (e.g., Michigan cross-walked academic standards with their SEL standards/competencies), whereas other states incorporate SEL into their curricular frameworks (e.g., Massachusetts). These examples demonstrate that some states explicitly wrote their SEL standards/competencies with other frameworks in mind (e.g., culture and equity), whereas other states made those connections within their implementation guidance documents. As such, we will note explicit examples of

attention to culture and equity in our review of the SEL standards/competencies, as well as in the implementation guidance section.

Figure 2. CASEL Analysis of Eight States' SEL Standards/Competencies

State	Provides Developmental benchmarks	CASEL 5 SEL Framework	State Specific SEL Framework	SEL framework also connects to/aligns with:							State provides support for implementation				
				Whole Child	Mental health /trauma/ACES	College/Career 21C	School climate/culture	Character	Equity/Diversity	MTSS	PBIS	Guidance for Implementing SEL	Instructional Practices	Professional Learning	Assessment/Measurement
IL (2004)	X*	X*		X	X		X						X		X
KS (2012/2018)	X		X		X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X
MI (2017)	X*	X		X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X
MN (2018)	X	X					X		X			X	X	X	X
NY (2018)	X	X*		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
ND (2018)	X	X			X		X			X					X
TN (2017)	X*	X		X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X
WI (2018)	X*		X		X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X

*PK aligned with K-12

**CASEL 5 competencies presented in 3 goals

Benchmarks and Developmental Indicators

As children develop socially and emotionally, educators may see many changes at once or small changes in behaviors over time. Age or grade level does not necessarily determine individuals' social and emotional competence; however, individuals may be more or less advanced in certain social and emotional competencies based on individual development and the child's context. The ways in which the 11 states and province reviewed delineate SEL standards/competencies varies. The majority of states (nine of the 11 states and territories) used grade bands rather than individual grade levels. Grade bands typically include early elementary, late elementary, middle school and high school. States vary in the grades they describe in early elementary (e.g., Grades K–2 or K–3) and late elementary (e.g., Grades 3–5 or 4–5). In addition, some states differentiated between early high school and late high school (see companion document, *Example State Standards or Competencies*). Two states (i.e., Tennessee and Wisconsin) included adulthood within their SEL standards/competencies. Maine and British Columbia took a slightly different approach, in which both provided developmental progression of the competency rather than defining it by grade or age. Maine defines four levels of student social and emotional development: *beginner*, *advanced beginner*, *strategic learner*, and *emerging expert*. In each of Maine's four SEL competencies, the

state charts a progression of how students develop their social and emotional competencies that is not bound by age or grade, but rather how the competency becomes more complex. Similarly, British Columbia uses developmental profiles for each of their six competencies. Each competency has between five and eight developmental profiles, referencing how the competency develops over time.

All 11 states and province recognize that the core social and emotional competencies and skills develop over time, becoming more complex as individuals learn and develop the competencies in multiple contexts. Although a nuanced analysis of the developmental indicators is beyond the scope of this review, it is important to recognize the similarities and differences across the benchmarks from the 10 states and province. (West Virginia is excluded as they did not include benchmarks). The remainder of this section is organized using the six Washington SEL standards. For each SEL standard, we analyze the similarities and differences that exist within the other state SEL standards/competencies (see *Example State Standards or Competencies* document to see a more detailed crosswalk).

Self-Awareness. Washington defines self-awareness as an individual’s ability to identify and name one’s emotions and their influence on behavior. The self-awareness standard and underlying benchmarks are consistent across the states’ SEL standards/competencies reviewed with slight differences. The underlying benchmarks in Washington and some notable distinctions and similarities between definitions and benchmarks across states include the following:

- Benchmark 1A—Demonstrates awareness and understanding of one’s emotions.
 - Almost all states (including Washington) include benchmarks related to understanding emotions.
- Benchmark 1B—Demonstrates knowledge of personal strengths, areas for growth, culture, linguistic assets, and aspirations.
 - Almost all states (including Washington) include benchmarks related to understanding personal strengths.
 - A focus on cultural and linguistic assets as a key ingredient of personal strengths is unique to Washington and Minnesota.
- Benchmark 1C—Demonstrates awareness and understanding of family, school, and community resources and supports.
 - Almost all states (including Washington) include identifying external supports under self-awareness, however, some states (i.e., Minnesota and North Dakota) include external supports under social awareness. Furthermore, North Dakota focused on help-seeking skills as a key component of identifying external supports.
- Other similarities and distinctions
 - Whereas Washington includes sense of personal responsibility under self-efficacy, most states include this construct under self-awareness.

- North Dakota, Wisconsin, and British Columbia included self-confidence and developing a personal identity as a key benchmark under self-awareness, whereas other states, (including Washington) did not mention confidence and personal identity in their benchmarks.

Self-Management. Washington defines self-management as an individual’s ability to develop and demonstrate the ability to regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in contexts with people different from oneself. Washington defines self-management similarly to other states however, Washington’s definition includes different benchmarks than other states. The underlying benchmarks in Washington and some notable similarities and distinctions between definitions and benchmarks across states include the following:

- Benchmark 2A—Demonstrates the skills to manage and express one’s emotions, thoughts, impulses, and stress in constructive ways.
 - All states (including Washington) except for Maine and British Columbia include managing and expressing emotions and thoughts in constructive ways as a benchmark in self-management.
- Benchmark 2B—Demonstrates constructive decision-making and problem-solving skills.
 - Almost all states (except the states that do not use the CASEL framework) include decision-making and problem solving in responsible decision-making. Washington includes it in self-management.
- Other similarities and distinctions
 - All states include goal setting and monitoring goals as part of self-management, whereas Washington includes it in self-efficacy.
 - Whereas Washington includes perseverance of goals under the self-efficacy standard, three states (North Dakota, Maine, and British Columbia) also include perseverance, self-motivation, and self-directed learning as key components of self-management.
 - Two states (Maine and British Columbia) include thinking strategies—creative and critical thinking—as part of their overarching frameworks, whereas the other states (including Washington) do not explicitly call out thinking strategies.

Self-Efficacy. Washington defines self-efficacy as an individual’s ability to motivate oneself, persevere, and see oneself as capable. Washington’s self-efficacy standard is distinct from other states’ SEL standards/competencies. Some notable similarities and distinctions with self-efficacy include the following:

- Benchmark 3A—Demonstrates the skills to set, monitor, adapt, persevere, achieve, and evaluate goals.
 - For those states that use the CASEL framework, goal-setting is a benchmark under self-management.
- Benchmark 3B—Demonstrates problem-solving skills to engage responsibly in a variety of situations.

- For those states that use the CASEL framework, problem-solving is a benchmark under responsible decision-making,
- Benchmark 3C—Demonstrates awareness and ability to speak on behalf of personal rights and responsibilities.
 - For those states that use the CASEL framework, awareness of and ability to speak on behalf of oneself is a benchmark under self-awareness.
- Other similarities and distinctions
 - Washington’s definition of self-efficacy is defined in a way that is inconsistent with the research literature on self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is typically defined as an individual’s belief that he or she is capable of performing a specific task.

Social Awareness. Washington defines social awareness as an individual’s ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Washington’s definition of social awareness aligns well with how other states define social awareness, including the underlying benchmarks. Some notable similarities and differences with social awareness include the following:

- Benchmark 4A—Demonstrates awareness of other people’s emotions, perspectives, cultures, language, history, identity, and ability.
 - Each state (including Washington) mentions demonstrating an awareness of other people’s emotions and perspectives. Washington and Minnesota’s benchmarks on awareness of other people are distinct because they explicitly reference culture and identity in this benchmark.
- Benchmark 4B—Demonstrates an awareness and respect for one’s similarities and differences with others.
 - Each state makes note of respecting similarities and differences. Minnesota, Michigan, Tennessee, and North Dakota explicitly reference culture here (whereas Washington does not).
- Benchmark 4C—Demonstrates an understanding of the social norms of individual cultures.
 - Only three states reference social cues or norms in their SEL benchmarks. Washington specifically calls out social norms as a benchmark and references social norms in the context of individual cultures. Michigan also references social cues as an individual benchmark, whereas Tennessee adds social cues in a benchmark that includes other concepts (e.g., perspective taking).
- Other similarities and distinctions
 - Whereas Washington has a benchmark related to contributing to the well-being of the school and community under social engagement, almost all states (except North Dakota and Kansas) include this benchmark under social awareness.

Social Management. Washington defines social management as an individual’s ability to make safe and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions. Social management is a unique standard for Washington compared to other states because all of the benchmarks under social management align with other states’ benchmarks under relationship skills. However, Washington’s definition of social management is closer to other states’ definition of responsible decision-making. Some notable similarities and differences for the specific benchmarks include:

- Benchmark 5A—Demonstrates a range of communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.
 - All states (including Washington) note that communication and social skills to interact effectively with others as an SEL benchmark. Maine and British Columbia are distinct as both include additional information about communication. For example, Maine includes communication as an SEL standard and has multiple benchmarks related to communication. British Columbia includes communication skills related to how students present information to external audiences.
- Benchmark 5B—Demonstrates the ability to identify and take steps to resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.
 - All states except for Maine and British Columbia incorporate a benchmark that specifically focuses on taking steps to resolve interpersonal conflict within their relationship skills standard/competency. Washington includes this benchmark in social management.
- Benchmark 5C—Demonstrates the ability to engage in constructive relationships with individuals of diverse perspectives, cultures, language, history, identity, and ability.
 - All states (except New York and Illinois) include a benchmark on building or developing positive relationships with others in their relationship skills standard/competency. Washington also includes this benchmark, but it is unique because it includes language on building relationships with those who hold diverse perspectives and with those from different cultures.
- Other similarities and distinctions
 - Minnesota, North Dakota, and British Columbia also include a benchmark on teamwork and working with others to accomplish common goals. Washington includes a similar benchmark under social engagement.

Social Engagement. Washington defines social engagement as an individual’s ability to consider others and a desire to contribute to the well-being of school and community. Similar to self-efficacy, Washington is the only state that includes a social engagement standard; however, the benchmarks Washington identified under this benchmark appear to fall under different SEL standards/competencies in other states. Some notable similarities and differences for the specific benchmarks include the following:

- Benchmark 6A—Demonstrates a sense of social and community responsibility.

- Washington defines demonstrating a sense of social and community responsibility in social engagement, whereas almost all states include it under social awareness (except Minnesota, Kansas, and North Dakota, which do not include this benchmark).
- Benchmark 6B—Demonstrates the ability to work with others to set, monitor, adapt, achieve, and evaluate goals.
 - Washington defines demonstrating the ability to work with others to achieve goals within social engagement, whereas Minnesota, North Dakota, and British Columbia include this benchmark in other standards/competencies. For example, Minnesota includes this in social awareness and North Dakota includes teamwork in relationship skills. Other states do not include this benchmark.
- Benchmark 6C—Demonstrates effective strategies to contribute productively to one’s school, workplace, and community.
 - The final benchmark, contributing productively to community, is unique to Washington. British Columbia has a standard on being a responsible and involved citizen. Other states do not include this benchmark in their SEL competencies/standards.

Implementation Guidance Documents Review

As noted in the previous section, states have increasingly developed SEL standards/competencies, most of which include grade-banded indicators for social and emotional development. However, providing guidance to educators on the development of social and emotional competencies alone is insufficient to fully support SEL (Dusenbury & Yoder, 2017). States have rolled out guides, including policies and guidance documents, to support implementation of SEL standards/competencies. The style and format of implementation guidance documents, and how those guidance documents support the implementation of state-level SEL standards/competencies, varies greatly across states. However, similar to the development of SEL standards/competencies, the SEL implementation guides use the best available research on systematic SEL (e.g., Kendziora & Osher, 2016; Kendziora & Yoder, 2016) and school climate supports (e.g., Yoder et al., 2017). Furthermore, although distinct, each state’s implementation guide recognizes that SEL implementation requires a broad approach to create a cohesive instructional program and schooling experience for students and adults within schools and districts.

The following section provides an overview of the implementation guidance developed by states to support the practical implementation of SEL standards/competencies. Specifically, AIR staff reviewed 28 pieces of state-developed implementation guidance from 11 states on the forefront of this work. Note that we use the term “implementation guidance” to encompass various types of products, including policy guides, guidance documents, toolkits, professional learning pieces, and alignment documents. Furthermore, states vary in the scope (e.g., comprehensiveness) and level (i.e., statewide, district, school or classroom) of their implementation guidance. For

example, states provide comprehensive supports for districts (e.g., Minnesota³), comprehensive supports for schools (e.g., Michigan⁴), or comprehensive supports for classrooms (e.g., Tennessee⁵), whereas other states create a broad statewide framework (e.g., California⁶) or provide guidance on how to embed SEL within cross-curricular subjects (e.g., Massachusetts⁷). Because states typically provide guidance at the system (school or district) or classroom levels, the following section summarizes implementation guidance that focuses on system-level and classroom-based approaches. Equity is a strategic focus of the OSPI workgroup, and as such, we also review equity-focused approaches. System-Level Approaches to SEL

In contrast to a standalone initiative, SEL is more appropriately considered a foundational and integral component of education to be woven effectively throughout all district and school-level structures and programming (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016). The integration of SEL spans areas including but not limited to school climate, leadership, policies, professional learning, curricula, instructional practice, assessment, data, communication, partnerships, and continuous improvement. Increasingly, state-level guidance reveals a commitment to a systemic approach to SEL planning, implementation, and monitoring for continuous improvement. A systemic approach is outlined for practitioner use in Washington’s online SEL module, “Learning Segment 2: Embedding SEL Schoolwide.” Furthermore, several other states detail an integrated, systemic approach to SEL in their guidance documents, including but not limited to:

- **California:** [*California’s Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles*](#) provides five guiding principles for SEL implementation and outlines the actions associated with each of the principles.
- **Massachusetts:** [*Guidelines on the Implementation of Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Curricula K–12*](#) present strategies to support broad SEL implementation, ranging from professional development and instruction to policies and community engagement.
- **Michigan:** [*Connecting Social and Emotional Learning to Michigan’s School Improvement Framework*](#) connects the state’s school improvement framework to social and emotional learning, aligning specific activities for each standard within their school improvement framework.
- **Minnesota:** [*Social Emotional Learning District Implementation and Professional Development Guidance*](#) provides districts with a flexible framework for implementing SEL into professional development for all district and school affiliates.

³ [Minnesota’s Social Emotional Learning District Implementation and Professional Development Guidance](#)

⁴ [Michigan’s Connecting SEL to School Improvement Framework](#)

⁵ [Tennessee’s Incorporating Social and Personal Competencies into Classroom Instruction and Educator Effectiveness: A Toolkit for Tennessee Teachers and Administrators](#)

⁶ [California’s Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles](#)

⁷ [Guiding Principles to Support Social and Emotional Learning embedded within the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Math and English Language Arts and Literacy](#)

- **New York:** [Social and Emotional Learning: Essential for Learning, Essential for Life](#) recommends schoolwide implementation of SEL by embedding SEL in school climate, discipline, instruction, professional development, and extended learning programs. On page 7 of this document is a systemic graphic depicting SEL at the center of district and schoolwide efforts.
- **Wisconsin:** [Social and Emotional Learning Competencies](#) outlines practices for the systemic prioritization, integration, planning, implementation, and sustainability of SEL.

In the following section, we provide an overview of the state-level guidance documents that provide information about a systemwide approach to SEL. Specifically, we divide the systemwide SEL implementation documents into four sections: climate and culture, planning for the SEL effort, implementing SEL efforts, and monitoring SEL efforts for continuous improvement.

Climate and Culture—Creating Conditions for SEL Implementation

Districts and schools should consider the climate and culture of a school as important context influencing the implementation of any innovation, and this is especially true for SEL improvement efforts. School climate stems from people’s experiences of school life and thus can be thought of as the collective “mood” of the school (Gruenert, 2008). Climate, which can vary based on events and changes in the school environment, at once influences and is influenced by school culture. Culture, or the school’s “personality,” is more deeply engrained and more difficult to change. Culture is a product of relationships among and between individuals and stakeholder groups, a school’s social norms (what is considered acceptable and unacceptable behavior within the school community), and the expectations individuals have for themselves and for others (Gruenert, 2008). School culture also encompasses issues directly related to equity, such as the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness and welcoming nature of classrooms and public spaces, and the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural diversity (Aaronson and Laughter, 2016). Climate and culture, and SEL, are intricately and reciprocally related, as climate and culture can either nurture or prohibit the successful implementation of SEL. At the same time, social and emotional competencies provide a foundation for individuals’ experiences, relationships, and expectations in school (Berg et al., 2017).

State-level SEL guidance addresses the key role of SEL in the cultivation of school climate and culture and vice versa, noting a district or school’s *ways of being* as a vital springboard for SEL efforts. As stated in [Michigan](#)’s guidance document, “Social and emotional skills and strategies contribute to a learning environment where learners feel secure and empowered and can meet their potential” (p. 21). [New York](#) further emphasizes a strengths-based approach to building community, establishing positive relationships with young people based on their assets and their potential contributions as resources to their schools.

Example documents that focus on climate and culture as it relates to SEL include the following:

- **California:** [California’s Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles](#) (p. 2)

- **Michigan:** [Connecting Social and Emotional Learning to Michigan's School Improvement Framework](#) (p. 21)
- **New York:** [Social Emotional Learning: Essential for Learning, Essential for Life](#) (pp. 24–25)

Planning SEL Efforts

States provide intentional steps toward planning in their state-level guidance documents, including creating an SEL leadership team, engaging stakeholders, creating a vision, and conducting an SEL needs assessment.

Creating an SEL Leadership Team Composed of Multiple Stakeholders. Systemic initiatives begin with conceptualization and planning, requiring a level of commitment from leaders who will champion the cause. Multiple state SEL implementation guides point to leadership as essential, as leaders model and create a culture in which SEL is valued and provide organizational support to sustain SEL efforts (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016). Leaders analyze data to determine need, allocate resources, and eventually, identify and delegate key responsibilities to qualified individuals within the system. For example, [Michigan's](#) implementation guide emphasizes the importance of leadership at every level of the system, calling on leadership teams, specifically, to spearhead planning, implementation, and continuous improvement efforts.

A leader, defined here, is not just the district superintendent or a school principal. Leadership for an SEL effort requires a leadership team, which consists of multiple members of the school community. A leadership team should consist of various stakeholders representing the broader community, including but not limited to administrators, teachers, students, family members, and invested members of community-based organizations. Among other benefits, ensuring that the SEL team is diverse and reflects the community can lead to greater cultural awareness in planning phases, and eventually, implementation that is culturally responsive to the needs of all students, families, and staff.

Example documents that focus on committed and diverse SEL leadership teams include the following:

- **California:** [California's Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles](#) (p. 2)
- **Massachusetts:** [Guidelines on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Curricula](#) (pp. 5–6)
- **Michigan:** [Connecting Social and Emotional Learning to Michigan's School Improvement Framework](#) (p. 20)

Engaging Stakeholders and Developing Family-School-Community Partnerships. Engaging stakeholders in a meaningful way takes time. The leadership team will need to engage multiple stakeholders throughout the entire SEL effort, including obtaining their input in planning and implementation, communicating the SEL efforts broadly, and monitoring and continuous improvements of the efforts. Stakeholders include multiple constituents, including educators, school staff (e.g., cafeteria workers, resource officers, and clerical staff), students, families, and

community members, to name a few. The ways in which the leadership team will engage with different stakeholders will vary depending on their role with the school.

States encourage schools or districts to engage multiple stakeholders in varying ways. For example, [Massachusetts's](#) guidelines detail school-level practices to meaningfully engage guardians and families, including articulating the importance of family collaboration and including families in SEL planning efforts; ensuring that staff have professional learning opportunities that build awareness and sensitivity to cultural, linguistic, and other aspects of family diversity; working to create a welcoming and inclusive environment through professional and supportive interactions between families and staff; and partnering with parent organizations to spread awareness around SEL programming. [Michigan's](#) guidance stresses the importance of a bidirectional approach that not only disseminates information *to* families, through strategies such as newsletters and texts, but also solicits input *from* families through surveys, focus groups, and other means. The document reinforces a need for all communication strategies to be culturally and linguistically responsive to all.

In addition to engaging families, multiple states provide strategies to engage community-based organizations, afterschool providers, and business leaders. For example, both [Michigan's](#) and [New York's](#) guidance documents highlight the need for collaborative partnerships between schools and providers of extended learning programs, including afterschool, summer school, expanded learning, and community-based learning and extra-curricular programs. Michigan also points to the benefits of partnering with community foundations and businesses, citing the practical support and funding such organizations can offer. [Massachusetts's](#) guidance suggests that engaging community organizations can also support service learning opportunities for students and shared professional learning opportunities for the adults in partnering schools and organizations.

Example documents that focus on engaging stakeholders in SEL efforts include the following:

- **California:** [California's Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles](#) (p. 4)
- **Massachusetts:** [Guidelines on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Curricula](#) (pp. 8–9)
- **Michigan:** [Connecting Social and Emotional Learning to Michigan's School Improvement Framework](#) (pp. 29–31)
- **New York:** [Social Emotional Learning: Essential for Learning, Essential for Life](#) (pp. 29)

Creating a Vision That Prioritizes SEL. Creating a shared and powerful vision—with corresponding goals—is important to sustain SEL efforts and ensure that everyone in a school or district is working toward the same purpose. A vision can remain constant; as involved stakeholders shape and develop a SEL effort over a span of years. A shared vision statement serves multiple functions. It can serve as a rallying cry, generating commitment to SEL throughout the system, and provide a focal point for an aligned and integrated approach. A strong vision communicates to the students, staff, families, and community what the leadership team and collective stakeholders hope to accomplish with the SEL efforts. Furthermore,

alignment to a shared vision or mission statement ensures that stakeholders are on the same page with regard to the purpose, goals, and methods of SEL implementation throughout the system.

Guidance from [Minnesota](#) recommends that after stakeholders are engaged and before implementation plans are made, the representative SEL team articulates a shared vision that drives the school's SEL efforts and provides a structure to create such a vision. Similarly, [Michigan's](#) guidance provides a template that schools and districts can use to create an SEL-specific vision and goals to guide their SEL work.

Example documents that focus on collective development of an SEL vision include the following:

- **Massachusetts:** [Guidelines on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Curricula](#) (p. 6)
- **Michigan:** [Connecting Social and Emotional Learning to Michigan's School Improvement Framework](#) (Appendix G)
- **Minnesota:** [Social Emotional Learning District Implementation and Professional Development Guidance](#) (pp. 7–8)
- **Wisconsin:** [Social and Emotional Learning Competencies](#) (p. 11)

Conducting an SEL Needs and Readiness Assessment That Aligns SEL-Related Resources.

Beginning with an analysis of current context via systemic needs and resources assessments can help leaders to map existing programs and resources as well as areas of need. It is important to consider multiple kinds of data when conducting such an assessment, including policies and procedural data, demographic data, student performance data, and perception data, to capture a more robust picture of all factors impacting and impacted by SEL in the school. Needs and resource assessments are distinct. Needs assessments afford the leadership team an opportunity to understand the needs of students and staff, whereas resource assessments help leadership teams understand the available materials to support the effort, including understanding the various efforts underway that supports SEL and the capacity of educators to engage in the work.

Multiple states encourage schools and districts to conduct needs and resource assessments to support their SEL efforts. For example, in addition to assessing needs, [Minnesota](#) states the importance of assessing available resources, priorities, and systems to support SEL, and explains that this should be done at the district, school, and classroom levels. The Minnesota guidance document goes on to recommend assessing the degree to which individuals within an organization are motivated to take on a new initiative. Assessments may also help to illuminate content knowledge of SEL across stakeholder groups, existing professional development offerings related to SEL, staffing structures to support SEL implementation and professional learning, and structures for professional collaboration to ensure SEL professional development is job-embedded.

Example documents that focus on needs and resources assessments include the following:

- **Massachusetts:** [Guidelines on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Curricula](#) (pp. 6)
- **Minnesota:** [Social Emotional Learning District Implementation and Professional Development Guidance](#) (pp. 4–5)

- **Michigan:** [Connecting Social and Emotional Learning to Michigan's School Improvement Framework](#) (pp. 23–24)

Implementing SEL Efforts

After initial activities to plan SEL efforts, the leadership team and educators can begin to implement their efforts. It is important to note that just because the team begins to implement, it does not mean that they will not have to return to planning efforts. For example, engaging stakeholders will be a part of each process. Implementing SEL efforts can include three components: embedding SEL in school operations, selecting and implementing evidence-based programs and practices, and creating a professional learning system.

Systems Change That Embeds SEL Into Functioning of School Operations. Districts and schools can intentionally embed SEL into every aspect of school operations, moving beyond the perception of SEL as a classroom initiative toward SEL as a “way of doing things.” Distilling initiatives related to SEL, such as discipline, behavior, mental health, school improvement, curriculum and instruction, and resilience despite trauma into key practices, and then highlighting the overlaps and complementary nature of these practices, can help educators to build cohesion and avoid a fragmented approach to serving the whole child. In other words, schools and districts can embed the philosophy of SEL (i.e., supporting the whole child) in school and district policies, procedures, and programs. Connecting SEL includes efforts that focus not only on school climate, professional collaboration, family and school partnerships, and communication, but also on the general functioning of the school, such as budgeting (finance), hiring personnel, and establishing board policies.

States have taken multiple approaches to embed SEL into schools’ operational functions. For example, [California](#) states prominently as its first of five guiding principles the need to, “Adopt whole child development as the goal of education” (p. 1). The second principle then recognizes that the integration of SEL across the whole system is needed to accomplish this goal. In addition, [Massachusetts](#) recognizes that schools have adopted many initiatives closely related to SEL and highlights the need for connection-making to avoid initiative fatigue. In Washington’s online professional learning segment two (titled, “Embedding SEL Schoolwide”), one activity aligns SEL to other efforts within a school (e.g., discipline, mental health, resilience, trauma sensitivity), and another activity helps educators identify how SEL is embedded in multiple areas in the school.

Example documents that focus on integration of SEL into policies and operations include the following:

- **California:** [California’s Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles](#) (p. 2)
- **Massachusetts:** [Guidelines on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Curricula](#) (p. 7)
- **Minnesota:** [Social Emotional Learning District Implementation and Professional Development Guidance](#) (pp. 20–21)

Selection, Implementation, and Adaptation of SEL Evidence-Based Programs and Practices. Selecting districtwide or schoolwide SEL programs or practices is an essential part of systemic implementation of SEL, and often educators think of this step first. However, educators should only implement SEL programs or practices once systemwide structures are in place, including professional learning, coaching support, and identification of fidelity data. Identification of evidence-based programs and practices provides an opportunity for educators to implement a cohesive instructional approach that supports student social and emotional development. Furthermore, the selection of SEL evidence-based programs and practices should be approached with intention and considered carefully. Factors impacting this selection should include the input and likely buy-in of teachers and other practitioners, as well as alignment to existing resources and research-based evidence for the effectiveness of the program in a like environment serving a like population. Considerations related to selecting and adapting an evidence-based SEL program are discussed in more detail in this document, in the section, “Classroom-Based Approaches to SEL.”

Example documents that focus on selection of evidence-based programs and practices include the following:

- **Massachusetts:** [Guidelines on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Curricula](#) (pp. 4–5)
- **Minnesota:** [Social Emotional Learning District Implementation and Professional Development Guidance](#) (pp. 16–18)
- **Washington:** [SEL Online Education Module: Building Foundations and Strategies: Learning Segment 5: Identifying and Selecting Evidence-Based Programs](#)

Creation of Professional Learning Systems. Meaningful, intensive, and ongoing professional learning opportunities for educators are vital to strengthening and sustaining SEL efforts (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson & Salovey, 2012). A cohesive professional system creates a system in which educators see the relevance of professional learning to their daily work.

If teachers sense a disconnect between what they are urged to do in a professional development activity and what they are required to do according to local curriculum guidelines, texts, assessment practices, and so on—that is, if they cannot easily implement the strategies they learn, and the new practices are not supported or reinforced—then the professional development tends to have little impact. (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009, p. 10)

Professional learning to support SEL effectively begins with supporting social and emotional awareness and competencies in adults, so that they may more impactfully model and teach social and emotional competencies for students.

Almost all states that AIR staff reviewed included SEL guidance documents that acknowledged professional learning as a priority. For example, [Wisconsin](#) and [Massachusetts](#) intentionally articulated an approach to professional learning that leaves no educator behind, recognizing *all* adult staff within the school as well as families and communities as important implementors of SEL. Learning opportunities for any adult who interacts with students, equipping them to model

social and emotional competencies consistently throughout the school day, reinforces cohesion in a schoolwide approach. Other state guidance documents recognize the power of linking support and professional learning to connect SEL practices and teacher effectiveness frameworks. For example, [Massachusetts's](#) guidebook on inclusive practice integrates SEL as one of three guiding frameworks (along with Universal Design for Learning and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) at the foundation of its teacher effectiveness framework. [Tennessee's](#) toolkit directly links instructional practices that promote social and personal competencies with the state's teacher evaluation process, and Tennessee is in the process of developing online modules for each of the signature practices.

Example documents that focus on educator professional learning related to SEL include the following:

- **California:** [California's Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles](#) (p. 3)
- **Massachusetts:** [Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice](#)
- **Massachusetts:** [Guidelines on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Curricula](#) (pp. 7–8)
- **Michigan:** [Connecting Social and Emotional Learning to Michigan's School Improvement Framework](#) (pp. 18-19)
- **Minnesota:** [Social Emotional Learning District Implementation and Professional Development Guidance](#) (pp. 8–9)
- **New York:** [Social Emotional Learning: Essential for Learning, Essential for Life](#) (pp. 28–29)
- **Tennessee:** [Incorporating Social and Personal Competencies Into Classroom Instruction and Educator Effectiveness: A Toolkit for Tennessee Teachers and Administrators](#)
- **Tennessee:** [K–12 Social and Personal Competencies Resource Guide](#)

Monitoring SEL Efforts for Continuous Improvement

Although integrative planning and implementation of SEL practices is a solid start, the work continues. The sustained success of any initiative increases with intentional monitoring and adapting in a cycle of continuous improvement. This begins with districts and schools collecting and analyzing data to best understand how the SEL efforts are being implemented (implementation data) and the outcomes of those efforts (outcome data). By collecting multiple types of data, schools and districts can better determine what aspects of the effort are working, what aspects are not working, and what aspects need modification or adaptation. Thus, it is important for schools and districts to create an intentional data system that focuses on ease of data use and effectiveness of data management, and that establishes a data culture that sets the expectation for data use at the heart of all decision making.

Multiple state-level SEL guidance documents emphasize the importance of continuous improvement of their SEL efforts. For example, [Michigan](#) developed a guide for the explicit

purpose of connecting SEL efforts to the state-articulated school improvement framework, thus integrating SEL into the school system at all levels. [Minnesota](#) traces the improvement cycle and the importance of data-informed decision-making in its guidance document devoted to SEL assessment. The Minnesota guide highlights the use of data to inform decisions on all levels (district, school, and classroom), noting the importance of both process and outcome data.

Example documents that focus on data-based monitoring of SEL efforts for continuous improvement include the following:

- **California:** [California’s Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles](#) (p. 4)
- **Massachusetts:** [Guidelines on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Curricula](#) (pp. 6)
- **Michigan:** [Connecting Social and Emotional Learning to Michigan's School Improvement Framework](#)
- **Michigan:** [Early Childhood to Grade 12 Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Competencies and Indicators](#)
- **Minnesota:** [Social and Emotional Learning Assessment Guidance](#)
- **Minnesota:** [Social Emotional Learning District Implementation and Professional Development Guidance](#) (pp. 21–23)
- **Wisconsin:** [Social and Emotional Learning Competencies](#) (pp. 13–14)

Classroom-Based Approaches to SEL

Three methods typically exist to support student social and emotional development in classrooms and extended learning programs, including targeted instruction to support social and emotional development, integration of academic instruction, and general teaching practices that promote application of social and emotional competencies (Dusenbury, Calin, Domitrovich, & Weissberg, 2015; Yoder, 2014). Each approach in isolation and in combination is important to create a comprehensive system of support for student social and emotional development in classrooms. States have developed guidance documents to support educators as they engage in each approach. Furthermore, states have provided districts and schools strategies to select and adopt evidence-based programs that promote one or more of these approaches.

Targeted Instruction

Targeted SEL instruction provides educators with concrete suggestions on ways they can support the development of specific social and emotional skills, attitudes, and knowledge. Guidance documents focused on targeted instruction fall into two categories. First, states include instructional strategies or activities that align with each of their developmental benchmarks (e.g., Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, and Tennessee). These activities are generally not associated with a specific scope and sequence, but rather they provide examples and suggestions on how educators can support student social and emotional development. Second, other states provide broader supports to target specific SEL instruction. For example, Massachusetts developed an

SEL planning tool that helps educators create a lesson that targets a social and emotional competency, and Missouri provides concrete lesson plans that support student social and emotional development.

Example documents that focus on targeted SEL instruction can be found at the following links:

- **Illinois:** [Illinois Classrooms in Action: Social Emotional Learning](#)
- **Massachusetts:** [Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Planning Tool](#)
- **Michigan:** [Early Childhood to Grade 12 Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Competencies and Indicators](#)
- **Minnesota:** [SEL Implementation Guidance](#)
- **Missouri:** [Social and Emotional Development Lesson Plans](#)
- **Tennessee:** [K–12 Social and Personal Competencies Resource Guide](#)

Connecting with Academic Instruction

Students use a variety of social and emotional competencies as they engage in rigorous academic instruction across content areas (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016). For example, to accurately identify a point of view in a text, students need to be able to use perspective taking; or to carry out a science investigation, students need to make responsible decisions and handle the materials with care (Johnson & Wiener, 2017).

States have also recognized the importance of connecting social and emotional development to academic instruction. States have written guidance documents to demonstrate this in two ways. First, states have provided educators with example activities and strategies to support social and emotional competencies for each content area (English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies). For example, Massachusetts provides example practices by each of the five core competencies (as defined by CASEL) for each content area. Second, states have cross-walked their SEL standards or competencies with their academic standards. For example, Michigan and Minnesota convened a group of stakeholders to align their SEL competencies with their core academic subjects.

Example documents that focus on connecting SEL to academic instruction include the following:

- **Massachusetts:** [Guidelines on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Curricula](#) (pp. 11–20)
- **Massachusetts:** [Social and Emotional Learning in Math](#)
- **Massachusetts:** [Social and Emotional Learning in English Language Arts and Literacy](#)
- **Michigan:** [Connecting Social and Emotional Learning to Michigan’s School Improvement Framework](#) (pp. A3–A13)
- **Minnesota:** [SEL Implementation Guidance](#)

General Teaching Practices That Promote SEL

Educators and students should understand that SEL and social and emotional competencies are a critical part of the schooling experience. Individuals use these competencies in many contexts in which they find themselves (e.g., family, work, friends, community). Thus, it is important for educators to embed SEL throughout the schooling and afterschool space, so that students can identify the social and emotional competencies they use throughout multiple contexts they navigate. One approach to do this is to embed general practices that promote the social, emotional, and academic development of students throughout all interactions with students—making “all time SEL time.” Select states have embraced 10 teaching practices that promote social and emotional development (Yoder, 2014). These 10 practices include student-centered discipline, teacher language, warmth and support, responsibility and choice, cooperative learning, classroom discussions, balanced instruction, academic rigor and expectations, competence building, and self-assessment and self-reflection. States are varied in how they have promoted these 10 practices. For example, Tennessee developed a toolkit that aligned each practice to their educator effectiveness efforts, and developed online modules related to each of the 10 practices. Other states (e.g., Michigan and Minnesota) referenced these practices in their toolkits but do not focus on those practices.

Example documents that focus on connecting to academics can be found at the following links:

- **Michigan:** [Connecting Social and Emotional Learning to Michigan's School Improvement Framework](#)
- **Michigan:** [Early Childhood to Grade 12 Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Competencies and Indicators](#)
- **Minnesota:** [Social Emotional Learning District Implementation and Professional Development Guidance](#)
- **Tennessee:** [Incorporating Social and Personal Competencies Into Classroom Instruction and Educator Effectiveness: A Toolkit for Tennessee Teachers and Administrators](#)
- **Tennessee:** [Social and Personal Competency Modules](#)

Selecting and Implementing Evidence-Based Programs

Selecting an evidence-based program that meets the needs of students and staff can be complex work. There are multiple considerations to determine whether a program will work in a particular context, including available resources, existing practices, readiness to begin implementation, and alignment with the needs of the targeted population. Because many evidence-based programs exist (CASEL, 2013, 2015), states have created guidance for districts and schools to take an informed approach to the adoption of evidence-based programs and/or curricula. For example, Washington’s online module devoted to this subject and the Minnesota guidance documents both provide information on common approaches to selecting and adapting evidence-based programs to meet the needs of all students.

Example documents that focus on selecting evidence-based programs can be found at the following links:

- **Massachusetts:** [Guidelines on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Curricula](#) (pp. 4–5)
- **Minnesota:** [Social Emotional Learning District Implementation and Professional Development Guidance](#) (pp. 16–18)
- **Washington:** [SEL Online Education Module: Building Foundations and Strategies: Learning Segment 5: Identifying and Selecting Evidence-Based Programs](#)

Equity-Focused SEL Supports

Equity considerations have gained increased attention in both educational policy and the supporting research literature. Equity, the standard that all students have access to the same opportunities, resources, and educational rigor despite race, gender, ethnicity, language, ability, background, family income, or any other demographic factor, applies to all aspects of educational programming, including SEL. Researchers and educators raise important questions and warn that, unless an equity lens is applied consistently when creating SEL policy, SEL implementation could inadvertently reinforce power and privilege paradigms and increase disparities. They point to fair access, bias awareness, and cultural consciousness as important remedies to this concern. Furthermore, SEL offers an important potential tool for increased equity, as it equips students and adults with the competencies needed for personal resilience despite adversity and interpersonal interactions that embrace diversity rather than discriminate (Aspen Institute, 2018; Gregory & Fergus, 2016).

Although the current level of attention to equity as it relates to SEL is relatively new, some states have prioritized and articulated an explicit commitment to equitable opportunities and outcomes in SEL guidance documents. For example, Washington integrated culturally responsive practices and equity throughout the five learning segments in the online module. In addition, Massachusetts created a [guidebook](#) and planning [tool](#) focused on inclusive practices for teachers to support students with disabilities. Other states, such as [California](#), place equity prominently within their SEL frameworks. In a different approach, [Michigan](#) includes reflective questions related to equity in its guide detailing the state’s SEL competencies and approach to SEL.

In this section, we provide more specific examples of how states have incorporated equity into their SEL guidance, specifically related to cultural responsiveness, student voice, MTSS, trauma-informed practices, and student-centered and restorative discipline. Example documents that focus on equitable implementation of SEL and/or SEL as a tool to increase equity include the following:

- **California:** [California’s Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles](#) (p. 3)
- **Massachusetts:** [Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice](#)
- **Massachusetts:** [Inclusive Practice Tool: Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Planning Tool](#)

- **Michigan:** [Early Childhood to Grade 12 Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Competencies and Indicators](#) (p. 9)
- **Minnesota:** [Great Lakes Equity Center Guidance](#)
- **New York:** [Social Emotional Learning: Essential for Learning, Essential for Life](#) (p. 10)
- **Wisconsin:** [Social and Emotional Learning Competencies](#) (p. 14)

Cultural Responsiveness

Culturally responsive teaching practices draw upon students' unique strengths and experiences while orienting learning in relation to individuals' cultural context (Gaye, 2013). Implications for SEL are strong, as cultural responsiveness is based in the premises that individual's behaviors are socially and culturally influenced, context matters, there are existing issues of power and privilege, and instruction should empower all students in ways that respect and honor their intersecting cultural influences. Additionally, social and emotional competencies are necessary to recognize the influence of one's own culture and to interact with others in a culturally responsive way.

Several state SEL guidance documents call explicitly for a culturally responsive approach to SEL. For example, [Minnesota](#) submitted its SEL framework to the Great Lakes Equity Center for a culturally responsive review. The review led to multiple recommendations to support SEL through a culturally responsive lens, such as basing curriculum on the cultural-linguistic realities of students and viewing those realities as assets, among others. Furthermore, Washington's online learning module, *Integrating SEL Into Culturally Responsive Classrooms*, addresses an intentional approach to culturally responsive SEL in depth.

Example documents that focus on a culturally responsive approach to SEL include the following:

- **Massachusetts:** [Social and Emotional Learning for All: Access, Cultural Proficiency, and Cultural Responsiveness](#)
- **Michigan:** [Connecting Social and Emotional Learning to Michigan's School Improvement Framework](#)
- **Michigan:** [Early Childhood to Grade 12 Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Competencies and Indicators](#)
- **Minnesota:** [Great Lakes Equity Center Guidance](#)
- **New York:** [Social Emotional Learning: Essential for Learning, Essential for Life](#) (p. 29)
- **Washington:** [Washington SEL Online Education Module: Building Foundations and Strategies: Learning Segment 4: Integrating SEL Into Culturally Responsive Classrooms](#)

Student Voice

Ensuring student voice can further ensure equitable implementation of SEL efforts that does not overlook student needs and insights. Throughout a district or school SEL effort, leadership teams

should engage students who are representative of diverse student sub-groups, while recognizing that each person is unique and can only truly speak for themselves. Few states have explicitly called out the importance of student voice in their SEL guidance document. [California](#), for instance, explicitly calls for the inclusion of student voice and perspective in improvement efforts related to social and emotional learning. [Wisconsin](#) encourages creative engagement and empowerment of students in their own learning around SEL, including supporting students in setting SEL goals, encouraging project-based learning that centers on SEL and/or requires application of SEL competencies, and incorporating SEL skills into academic and career planning.

Example documents that focus on student voice in SEL planning and implementation include the following:

- **California:** [California’s Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles](#) (p. 3)
- **Wisconsin:** [Social and Emotional Learning Competencies](#) (p. 14)

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

MTSS provide an organizing framework for promotion, prevention, and intervention strategies applied in varying intensity to meet individual students’ academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs. Based on a data-driven, problem-solving process, an MTSS illuminates student needs to further ensure that no students go unnoticed. This is true of students who receive special education services as well as those who do not. Because an MTSS allows educators to tailor interventions that allow all students to thrive, an MTSS is referenced here in relation to equity.

SEL strategies span the tiers of an MTSS model, enabling schools to proactively provide universal innovations for all students and to customize interventions that address academic and behavioral challenges for at-risk students (secondary interventions) and high need students (tertiary interventions). Some states are beginning to incorporate SEL within their tiered strategies. For example, [New York](#) offers guidance focused on the promotional and preventative nature of SEL, stating that, “Infusing SEL through all facets of school life is a universal intervention that all other academic and behavioral interventions can and should build upon” (p. 9).

An example document that highlights SEL in relation to implementation of an MTSS:

- **New York:** [Social Emotional Learning: Essential for Learning, Essential for Life](#) (pp. 8–10)

Trauma-Informed Practices

The potential impacts of trauma on children and youth who have undergone adverse childhood experiences cannot be overlooked when striving for an equitable approach to learning, including social and emotional learning. A trauma-sensitive approach recognizes the unique strengths and challenges of children and youth in light of the adversities they have faced. Because exposure to trauma can have neurological effects that impede the learning process as well as students’ ability to cope with stress, teachers must be aware of the need to adapt practices to better serve students experiencing the effects of trauma and adjust their thinking about trauma-triggered behaviors

(Walkley & Cox, 2013). It is also important to note that children in under-resourced living environments are at greater risk for chronic traumatic exposure and its effects.

Fortunately, educators can play a powerful role in helping students to build resilience through supportive relationships and trauma-informed teaching practices. SEL can be an empowering tool for youth who have experienced trauma, as it can afford students greater self-awareness and management skills to cope, social awareness and skills to interact appropriately with others despite the effects of trauma, and decision-making skills to navigate life circumstances from a foundation of social and emotional competency. SEL also helps to create a climate in which all youth, including youth who have experienced trauma, feel respected and supported.

States are beginning to connect SEL and trauma-informed practices at all levels of the school system. For example, [Tennessee](#) calls the integration of social and personal competencies school-wide and in classrooms a “buffer to the effects of trauma” (p. 8) and calls for a trauma-informed approach to SEL implementation. [New York](#) does the same, giving special attention to the need for educator support regarding the implementation of trauma-informed practices, and points to external resources. In addition, Michigan recently developed an online module connecting SEL and trauma.

Example guidance documents that focus on a trauma-informed approach to SEL include the following:

- **New York:** [Social Emotional Learning: Essential for Learning, Essential for Life](#) (p. 13)
- **Tennessee:** [K–12 Social and Personal Competencies Resource Guide](#) (pp. 7–8)

Student-Centered and Restorative Discipline

SEL provides an important and necessary foundation for approaches to discipline that are student centered and restorative in nature. When something goes wrong in regard to student behavior, restorative practices offer an alternative to overly punitive and exclusionary practices that are proven to have disproportionate negative impact on minority student groups (González, 2014). Instead, restorative practices keep the restoration of relationships at the center of collective problem solving and focus on the repair of harm done to others. Often, the intention of restorative practices is to serve a preventative, proactive role in supporting the development of social and emotional competencies and build community to help prevent incidences and conflicts before they occur (Gregory, Clawson, Davis, and Gerewitz, 2016).

Increasingly, states are incorporating student-centered and restorative practices, an approach related to SEL and supportive of the social-emotional development of students, within their SEL guidance. For example, the relationship between SEL and restorative practices is highlighted in depth in [New York’s](#) SEL guidance document, which defines a restorative approach to discipline as focused on strategies and skills such as, “understanding and managing one’s emotions and behavior, negotiating conflict constructively, building empathy, making constructive decisions about personal behavior, and realistically evaluating the consequences of one’s behavior” (p. 26). [Tennessee](#) traces specific connections between the state teacher educator effectiveness

framework and student-centered discipline, as well as other instructional practices to promote SEL.

Example documents that focus on connections between SEL and student-centered discipline and/or restorative discipline include the following:

- **California:** [California’s Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles](#) (p. 2)
- **Tennessee:** [Incorporating Social and Personal Competencies Into Classroom Instruction and Educator Effectiveness A Toolkit for Tennessee Teachers and Administrators](#) (p. 11)
- **New York:** [Social Emotional Learning: Essential for Learning, Essential for Life](#) (pp. 25–28)

Conclusion

More and more states are developing either SEL standards/competencies or SEL implementation guidance documents (Dusenbury et al., 2018). States do not always develop both SEL standards/competencies and implementation guidance documents. Among the states that have developed both, the implementation guidance documents are most often provide broad implementation strategies, whereas the SEL standards/competencies focus at the student-level. In others, states (11 of the 15 states and territories reviewed) create the SEL standards/competencies to guide educators on what social and emotional competencies can look like across grade bands, whereas implementation guidance documents are typically aimed toward shaping systems, namely a school or classroom. As a result, states have created content for standards/competencies documents separately from implementation guidance documents. However, some standards/competencies documents (e.g., Michigan, Minnesota, and Tennessee) also include example activities associated with grade-banded, developmental indicators. In these instances, states also provide instructional guidance to educators at the grade-band level to support student social and emotional development.

As state educational leaders continue to think about how to create implementation guidance documents that align with their indicators, these documents can begin to answer some key questions about the connections between the indicators and implementation. For example, does the guidance help schools and districts select SEL programs and practices that align with the developmental indicators? Are schools and districts measuring those indicators formatively? How do the guidance documents consider the development of social and emotional competencies, reference culture and context, and embed SEL throughout the fabric of the day? By considering these questions, states can create documents that define social and emotional development and at the same time support educators in implementing strategies in support of this development.

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