Washington SEL Implementation Brief: For Education Leaders

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING: PART OF THE FABRIC OF SCHOOL LIFE

Schools that focus on creating welcoming and inclusive environments that support all students' social emotional development in a culturally responsive way that honors students' histories and cultures can set youth up for long-term success and well-being. The school environment and relationships with others directly affect how students learn and how they apply that learning. For example, learning happens:

- In safe and supporting environments. When students feel supported by and connected with their peers and educators, their brain functions more effectively, and the learning networks in their brain become stronger.
- In schools that are fair and welcoming. When education leaders use fair discipline approaches that build community, students are more likely to attend school, stay enrolled, and graduate.[1]
- When social emotional learning (SEL) is intentionally embedded into every aspect of daily school life (intentional and consistent strategies, practices, and policies), and occurs in partnership with families, communities, and afterschool programs.

Education leaders lead the charge in creating this environment, including embedding systemic SEL throughout the school and during out-of-school time.

WHAT IS SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING ?

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

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

SEL supports **education equity**[2] in multiple ways: emphasizing whole-child development, drawing attention to the social nature of learning, advancing the belief that all children can learn, developing young people's skills to navigate social contexts, and improving relationships between students and educators—a key protective factor for **all** students.[3]

Washington State's SEL Standards[4]

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

Washington State SEL Framework and Guiding Principles

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

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

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

Universal design:
Learning differences are planned for and accommodated.

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

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[1] Aspen Institute. (2019). *From a nation at risk to a nation at hope: Recommendations from the Commission of Social, Emotional, and Academic Development*. Retrieved from http://nationathope.org/report-from-the-nation-download/
[2] Educational equity means that each child receives what he or she needs to develop his or her full academic and social potential. Retrieved from the National Equity Project website: http://nationalequityproject.org/about/equity
[3] Jones, S. M., & Kahn, J. (2017). *The evidence base for how we learn: Supporting students' social, emotional, and academic development. Consensus statements of evidence from the Council of Distinguished Scientists*. Washington, DC: Aspen Institute.
[4] Social and Emotional Learning Benchmarks Workgroup. (2016). *Addressing social emotional learning in Washington's K–12 public schools.* Retrieved from http://www.k12.wa.us/Workgroups/SELB-Meetings/SELBWorkgroup2016Report.pdf

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"The most effective social and emotional learning (SEL) requires a strategic, systemic approach that involves everyone, from district and school leaders to community partners to family members, working together to ensure students receive the support they need."[5]

ENTRY POINTS FOR IMPLEMENTING SEL IN SCHOOLS NOW

1. **Relationships matter**. Build positive relationships with your students. Affirm the culture and background of the diverse students you serve. Draw from your students' cultural assets to enrich SEL in the classroom.
2. **Context matters.** Students and adults use their social emotional skills depending on the context in which they find themselves. Start by building an infrastructure to support long-term implementation of SEL. Build commitment and ownership with your school, families, and community, and embed SEL into all the contexts in which students find themselves.
3. **Knowledge of self matters.** Begin with developing your own SEL competencies. Use a self-assessment, such as this one from the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, to reflect on how your experiences and cultural background impact your teaching.
4. **Awareness of current SEL work matters**. Learn about the current SEL work in Washington State by checking out standards, benchmarks, indicators, and guiding principles. Explore ways you can meet these standards in your classes or embed them into classroom rituals. For learning modules on how to implement SEL schoolwide, visit the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI's) SEL online module, Learning Segment 2: Embedding SEL Schoolwide, or Washington State's Implementation Guide draft.
5. **Using effective SEL strategies matters**. Use and assess instructional strategies and classroom management techniques that foster a supportive, caring classroom environment—such as these Three Signature SEL Practices from Oakland Unified School District. Teachers and staff need to understand SEL and its connection to equity, learning, and school climate before explaining it to students and families. See the Washington SEL online module.
6. **Collaboration with others matters.** There is a plethora of resources regarding school SEL implementation. Use step-by-step resources, such as the CASEL school guide, and connect with local schools that are already implementing SEL.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SEL[6]

✓ Create an SEL leadership team comprised of multiple partnerships and relationships.
✓ Engage stakeholders and develop authentic family-school-community partnerships.
✓ Create a vision that prioritizes SEL and the whole child.
✓ Conduct an SEL needs and readiness assessment.
✓ Align resources and policies to connect SEL with larger efforts to transform education in support of equity.
✓ Create an implementation plan that includes school climate and culture, culturally responsive supports, and explicit classroom-based approaches that promote SEL.
✓ Provide ongoing support.
✓ Monitor your SEL progress with a focus on continuous improvement.

SCHOOLWIDE SEL RESOURCES

CASEL School Guide
CASEL has documented, field-tested, and refined a strategic, collaborative process for schoolwide SEL.

Recommendations from the Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development
Recommendations on how to embed SEL into the fabric of every school and community.

The Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI)
A hub for knowledge, resources, and tools to promote high-quality systemic SEL implementation.

Social Emotional Learning and Equity Pitfalls and Recommendations
Check out resources for achieving educational equity in your school.

SEL Coaching Toolkit
This toolkit is for instructional coaches, administrators, and district leaders who support teachers/staff in integrating SEL into their daily instructional practices.

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[5] CASEL. (2019). *CASEL schoolwide SEL implementation: Indicators of schoolwide SEL*. Retrieved from https://schoolguide.casel.org/what-is-sel/indicators-of-schoolwide-sel/
[6] OSPI. (2019). *Student support—social emotional learning*. Retrieved from http://www.k12.wa.us/StudentSupport/SEL/default.aspx

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