Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs:

CASEL Criteria Updates and Rationale

Developed by
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Executive Summary

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defined social and emotional learning (SEL) more than two decades ago. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities. Weissberg and colleagues (2015) have identified a set of five core clusters of social and emotional competencies (SECs): self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

To this end, the *CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs* (referred to herein as the CASEL Guide or Program Guide) was created to provide a systematic framework for evaluating the quality of social and emotional learning programs and share best-practice guidelines for school, district, and state teams on how to select and implement SEL programs. The Program Guide identifies programs for preschool, elementary, middle school, and high school grades.

CASEL believes that using high-quality evidence-based programs is critically important to foster students' social and emotional development.

To be considered for inclusion, programs must be universal, that is, for use with all students, delivered during the school day, and designed for students in the preschool to high school grade range. Programs must also have written documentation of their approach to promoting students' social and emotional development and provide a sufficient level of detail to ensure the consistency and quality of program delivery. Finally, evaluation, design, and implementation criteria are evaluated according to the type and rigor of evidence and key features that programs must demonstrate to be included.

The purpose of this document is to provide evidence-based rationale for updates to the Program Guide that are planned for release in 2021. Updates to the Program Guide are undertaken when advancements in the field of SEL indicate the need to change criteria for program evaluation, design, and/or implementation.

The document is divided into five sections. **Section I** provides a brief background to the Program Guide, existing criteria for inclusion, and overviews in key advancements motivating the need for an updated version. The last times CASEL updated its approach to the review process for the Program Guides were 2013 (preschool and elementary) and 2015 (middle and high school). Since those updates, the field has progressed in terms of research, practice, and policy. These advances motivate updates to the evaluation, design, and implementation criteria required for inclusion in the 2021 comprehensive (PreK-12) Program Guide.

Section II describes the criteria and rationale for updates to program evaluation outcomes. First, current evaluation criteria are described for CASEL SELect, Promising, and SEL-Supportive programs. Next, the process of updating these criteria, including efforts by the CASEL Program Guide review panel to ensure the Guide follows current standards of rigorous and relevant scientific evidence, are described. Then, the evaluation updates are presented in two categories: (a) updates to evaluation design and methodology, including those guided by evidence standards from the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, and (b) updates to student and institutional outcomes that emphasize educational equity, developmental perspectives, and student perspectives.

Section III describes the evidence and rationale for updates to the program design criteria. Current design criteria are described, followed by a discussion of the process for updating those criteria that included literature reviews, informational interviews with SELect programs, and analyses of strategies in recent programming. This is followed by a presentation of the design updates. These pertain to developing adult SEL and strategies that support educational equity.

Section IV describes the evidence and rationale for updates to implementation support criteria. Current implementation criteria are described along with the process of updating these criteria that included research reviews of SEL programs and years of field testing and reviewing programs for the CASEL Program Guide. This is followed by a presentation of the implementation updates. These pertain to employing evidence-based professional development and providing implementation supports across settings.

Section V provides a short conclusion and an analysis of possible future directions.

A companion brief is available that summarizes the criteria updates discussed in this document and provides answers to frequently asked questions.

The updated Program Guide will be available on CASEL's website (casel.org) in the spring of 2021.

Support for *CASEL's Guide to Effective SEL Programs* is provided by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative™ as well as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. We are deeply grateful for their support and collaboration.

Purpose and Overview

Purpose of the Document. The purpose of this document is to provide evidence-based rationales for updates to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) *Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs* (referred to here as the CASEL Guide or Program Guide). The Program Guide provides a systematic framework for evaluating the quality of social and emotional learning programs and shares best-practice guidelines for school, district, and state teams on how to select and implement SEL programs. Updates to the CASEL Program Guide are undertaken when advancements in the field of SEL create a need to change criteria for program evaluation, design, and/or implementation.

This document is organized into five sections. First, a brief background is provided to describe the Program Guide, existing criteria for inclusion, and key advancements motivating the need for an updated version. Second, the evidence and rationale for updates to program evaluation outcome criteria are described. Third, the evidence and rationale for updates to program design criteria are described. Fourth, the evidence and rationale for updates to implementation criteria are described. The document ends with a brief conclusion.

A companion document is available that summarizes the criteria updates discussed in this paper and provides answers to frequently asked questions.

What is SEL? Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities. (CASEL, 2020). Weissberg and colleagues (2015) have identified a set of five core clusters of social and emotional competencies (SECs): self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

CASEL has been committed to a continuous process of learning, examining, and collaboratively refining the understanding of SEL. Throughout this process, our goal has remained the same: advance high-quality SEL in schools everywhere so that all adults and young people can thrive. Recently, CASEL shared updates to definitions and our framework. In the spirit of alignment, CASEL has also probed how these updates translate to our understanding of high-quality, evidence-based SEL programming so as to continue to provide robust and consistent programming information to the field.

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As illustrated in Figure 1, universal, school-based SEL programming is part of a long-term process of change. SEL programs can foster positive school climate and equitable learning conditions that provide all PreK to Grade 12 students with regular opportunities to actively learn and practice social and emotional competencies. To create these conditions, adults need support and training to implement programs well and to develop their own social and emotional competencies. The conditions of learning can then lead to short- and long-term benefits for students. In the short-term, students develop SECs and positive attitudes toward themselves, others, and the school. Over time, short term outcomes foster long-term changes including: improved academic performance, positive social behaviors and social relationships, and reduced behavior problems and psychological distress (Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Gullotta, 2015; National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, 2018). Overall, SECs and related outcomes prepare students to succeed in college, work, and family, and to be active constructors of a just and civil society.

Universal, School-Based SEL Programming: Process of Change

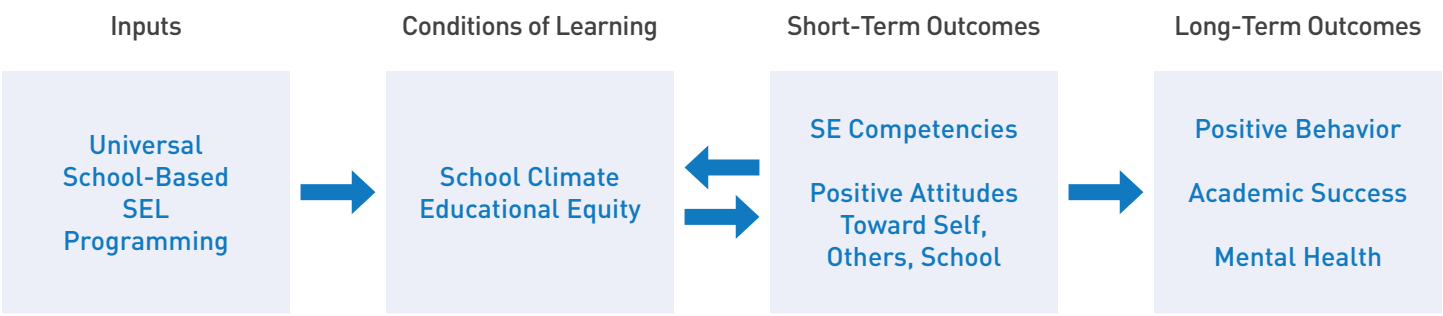


Figure 1. SEL programming creates the conditions of learning to support a long-term, developmental proces of positive student outcomes

Section I. Background

What is the CASEL Program Guide? The *CASEL Program Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs* provides a systematic framework for evaluating the quality of social and emotional learning programs. This framework is used to rate and identify well-designed, evidence-based SEL programs to provide educators with information to select and implement SEL programs in their states, districts, and schools. The Program Guide summarizes information about the characteristics of nationally available, multiyear programs in a clear, easy-to-read "consumer reports" format. It also documents significant advances in the SEL field, establishes new and more rigorous standards for SEL program adoption, and provides suggestions for next steps for SEL research and practice.

The Program Guide also supports policymakers by identifying evidence-based approaches. Federal, state, and district policymakers are encouraged to use the CASEL Guide to support high-quality practice. For example, policymakers may point to the CASEL Program Guide as a source for evidence-based programs. Policymakers may also incorporate relevant sections of the CASEL Guide into their own policies and guidance.

The Program Guide is available to identify programs for preschool and elementary grades, and for middle school and high school grades. To be considered for inclusion, programs must meet all evidence criteria, be universal, that is, for use with all students, delivered during the school day, and designed for students in the prekindergarten to high school grade range. Programs can be conceptualized as reflecting one or more of the following four approaches:

- ***Free-standing lessons*** specifically and explicitly designed to enhance students' social and emotional competencies (e.g., such as a lesson that teaches students strategies for coping with stress or anxiety).
- ***Teaching practices*** designed to create optimal conditions for the development of social and emotional competence, including strategies that promote reflection by students or build positive and supportive relationships among teachers, students, and families.
- ***Integration of SEL*** (lessons and/or practices) and academic instruction (such as an ELA, social studies or mathematics curriculum that incorporates SEL lessons or practices).
- ***Organizational strategies*** designed to create systemic structures and supports to promote students' social and emotional development, including a schoolwide culture conducive to learning. Such approaches should also ensure that evidence-based classroom or schoolwide practices or programs are used to support student social and emotional development.

Programs must also have written documentation of their approach to promoting students' social and emotional development and provide a sufficient level of detail to ensure the consistency and quality of program delivery. Finally, to be included in the Guide, evaluation, design, and implementation criteria—based on the type and rigor of evidence provided and key features of the programs—must be met. An overview of existing evaluation, design, and implementation criteria is provided in Sections II through IV. Programs included in the Program Guide are designated as either SELect, Promising, or SEL-Supportive (formerly titled SEL-Related).

CASEL SELect programs must:

- **Be evidence-based with at least one carefully conducted evaluation that documents positive impacts on specific student outcomes and/or institutional outcomes.**

- **Be well-designed, classroom-based programs that systematically promote students' social and emotional competence, provide opportunities for practice, and offer multiyear programming.**
- **Deliver high-quality training and other implementation supports, including initial training and ongoing support to ensure sound implementation.**

CASEL Promising programs:

- **Must be well-designed and provide comprehensive SEL programming but lack adequate research evidence of their effectiveness on student outcomes.**
- **May also demonstrate a positive impact on teaching practices without accompanying positive student outcomes.**

CASEL SEL-Supportive programs (formerly called SEL-Related):

- **Meet the SELect or Promising criteria for their evidence of effectiveness on student outcomes and could be a beneficial component of systemic SEL implementation, but from a design perspective lack the necessary criteria for inclusion.**
- **Specifically, these programs may not cover competencies comprehensively (for example, confining self-management to deep breathing but not including important components like goal-setting), offer opportunities for practice and generalization, be part of a Tier 1 approach for all students, or be designed for implementation during the school day.**

The Program Guide describes and uses tables to rate each program according to evidence of effectiveness and multiple design and implementation topics.

Advances in the Field. CASEL most recently updated its approach to the review process for the Program Guides in 2013 (preschool and elementary Guide) and 2015 (middle and high school Guide). Since those updates, the field has progressed in a number of ways, including: the *Handbook on Social and Emotional Learning: Research and Practice* (Durlak et al., 2015), The Science of Learning and Development initiative (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019), the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (NCSEAD, 2017, 2019), important reviews (Jagers et al., 2019; Mahoney et al., 2020), meta-analyses of program impacts (Durlak et al., 2011; Sklad et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2017; Wiglesworth et al., 2016) and most recently the defining of Transformative SEL as a means to understand how SEL works in service of educational equity (Jagers et al., 2019). This progress has advanced the field in areas such as academic integration, equity, adult SEL, and coordinated school-based partnerships with family and community programming.

Likewise, there have been federal policy advances including the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 that provide evidence standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2016) along with growth in state SEL policy, district work, school work, and assessment (Assessment Work Group, 2019; CASEL, 2020a, 2020b; Yoder et al., 2020). Moreover, there has been growing interest in the evidence base for SEL programs, and other SEL program reviews have been developed around facets of programming. For example, Jones and colleagues (2017) provided a content analysis of several leading SEL and character education programs, and RAND (Wrabel et al., 2018) reviewed SEL interventions for K–12 students according to ESSA standards of evidence.

Given these advances, between 2018-2020, CASEL engaged in an extensive continuous improvement process aimed at expanding the depth of the Program Guide. Evaluation, design, and implementation criteria required for inclusion in the Program Guide are being updated with a planned release in 2021. The evidence and rationale for the updated criteria are described below in three sections. Section II describes updates for the evaluation outcome criteria, Section III describes updates for the design criteria, and Section IV describes updates for the implementation criteria.

A. Current Evaluation Criteria

CASEL SELect Programs. The 2013 (preschool and elementary) and 2015 (middle and high school) Program Guides include the following evaluation criteria for a designation of SELect:

- ***Criterion 1: Universal, School-Based Program.*** The evaluation assesses the effects of a program that is implemented at the universal level, during the regular school day, with students who fall within the PreK-12 grade range.
- ***Criterion 2: Appropriate Comparison Group.*** Evaluation uses a pre-post randomized control trial (RCT) or pre-post quasi-experimental (QE) design that includes a comparison group.
- ***Criterion 3: Signi icant Main E ects and Controls.*** The evaluation reports statistically significant main effects between the intervention and comparison group using appropriate analytic methods, while adjusting for differences in the outcome variable at pre-test.
- ***Criterion 4: Positive E ects on Student Behavior.*** Positive effects were found in a behavioral student outcome domain (i.e., improved positive social behavior; reduced conduct problems; reduced emotional distress; or improved student-reported identity and agency, connectedness to school, and school climate).

CASEL Promising Programs. Promising Program evaluations have at least one of the following features:

- The evaluation shows a positive impact favoring the intervention group only on nonbehavioral outcomes such as attitudes or a specific social or emotional skill (e.g., emotion recognition or decision-making).
- The evaluation demonstrates positive significant outcomes that favor the intervention group but does not adjust for pre-test, and the groups were equivalent at baseline.
- The evaluation shows an outcome for improved teaching practices and not only a behavioral student outcome.
- The evaluation includes a significant outcome that favors the comparison group on an outcome that is substantively important to the program's theory, but the program has an additional qualifying evaluation with an independent sample that demonstrates positive effects by at least a 2:1 ratio (i.e., at least two effects favoring the intervention group for every one effect favoring the comparison group).

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B. Process for Updating Evaluation Criteria

In July 2019, a panel of experts[3] that included CASEL staff, board members, and consultants began a critical review of the existing evidence criteria used for inclusion in the Program Guide. This review process is ongoing. A goal of this review is to ensure that the evaluation, design, and implementation training criteria in the Program Guide follow current standards of rigorous and relevant scientific evidence. Requiring strong scientific evidence helps ensure that programs included in the Program Guide will be most likely to yield desired benefits if well-implemented. An important consideration for what constitutes "rigorous and relevant" scientific evidence is the criteria for effective programming provided under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) described below.

The CASEL review panel examined best practices in evaluation research used to strengthen the rigor of evidence including: (1) analytic sample size, (2) use of appropriate methods for handling sample attrition, (3) inclusion of appropriate outcomes to show program effectiveness, and (4) the role of independent evaluators to reduce potential bias.

Taken together, this review process identified several areas where the evidence of effectiveness has advanced. To better incorporate current standards of evidence, the panel concluded that several topics in the Program Guide should be updated. These include providing current information on the scientific rigor supporting evidence-based SEL programming and increasing correspondence with ESSA evidence criteria.

Evaluation updates that impact SELect status are noted below in blue. ***Some evaluation updates described below do not impact SELect status*** (e.g., the role of an independent evaluator in the program evaluation). Nonetheless, all updates are considered important. **Therefore, programs will be documented on all updates on the program description page using a table and standard set of symbols, and these will appear in the 2021 Program Guide.**

These updates involve modifications or additions to the evaluation criteria. Figure 1 shows the updates to SELect status for Criteria 3 and 4 in blue.

> ***Criterion 1: Universal, School-Based Program.*** The evaluation assesses the effects of a program that is implemented at the universal level, during the regular school day, with students who fall within the PreK-12 grade range.
>
> ***Criterion 2: Appropriate Comparison Group.*** Evaluation uses a pre-post randomized control trial (RCT) or pre-post quasi-experimental (QE) design that includes a comparison group.
>
> ***Criterion 3: Significant Main Effects and Controls.*** The evaluation reports statistically significant main effects between the intervention and comparison group using appropriate analytic methods while adjusting for differences in the outcome variable at pre-test. A minimum final analytic sample size of 100 is used, and appropriate methods for handling sample attrition are employed.
>
> ***Criterion 4: Positive Effects on Student Outcomes.*** Positive effects were found in student outcomes, institutional outcomes, improved academic performance with other social and emotional outcomes, improved positive social behavior, reduced conduct problems, or reduced emotional distress).

3 Panel members included Linda Dusenbury, Ph.D., Mark T. Greenberg, Ph.D., Robert Jagers, Ph.D., Joseph L. Mahoney, Ph.D., Kimberly Schonert-Reichl, Ph.D., Alexandra Skoog-Hoffman, Ph.D., Roger P. Weissberg, Ph.D., and Brittney Williams, Ph.D.

Criterion 1: Universal, School-Based Program	Criterion 2: Appropriate Comparison Group	Criterion 3: Significant Main Effects and Controls	Criterion 4: Positive Effects on Student Behavior
• Does the evaluation assess the effects of a program that is implemented at the universal level, during the regular school day, with students who fall within the PreK-12 grade range? • Was this program designed to be used with all students at the school? • Were students selected based on prior behavioral issues? Cannot be included. • Were the students selected based on their risk of academic failure? Exception to include for review.	• Does the evaluation use a pre-post randomized control trial (RCT) or pre-post quasi-experimental (QE) design that included a comparison group that did not participate in the program? • How were participants assigned to the treatment or control group? • Was it randomized?	• Does the evaluation report statistically significant main effects between the intervention & comparison group using appropriate analytic methods, while adjusting for differences in the outcome variables at pre-test? • Be sure that baseline levels are tested? If there are differences at pre-test, did the evaluator adjust or control for those differences? • **Sample size of 100 (taking into account power analysis)**	• Were there any positive effects found with students on outcomes in one of the behavioral student outcome domains? • **Improved Academic Performance with positive behavioral student outcome** • Improved Positive Social Behavior. • Reduced Problem Behaviors • Reduced Emotional Distress • **Improved student and institutional outcomes (e.g., identity, agency, school connectedness, school climate) reported by youth.** • If the outcome domains fall within Additional Student Outcomes (Improved SEL Skills & Attitudes)—students reported that they changed their mindset re: SEL skills, attitudes, beliefs, or mindset. • Teacher Outcomes (Improved Teaching Practice)—Significant impact on teaching practices that promote student SEL.

SELect meets all 4 criteria

SELect Program evaluations have:

- A true comparison group
- A pre- & post-test of the appropriate measures
- Positive and significant effect(s) on one of the behavioral student outcomes for the treatment group

Promising Programs evaluations have:

- Positive and significant effect(s) favoring the treatment group on non-behavioral outcome (student attitudes & teacher outcomes)
- An outcome that favors the comparison group & doesn't have an additional evaluation
- No adjustment or controls for pre-test outcomes in analyses

Promising doesn't fully meet criteria 3 & 4

Figure 1. CASEL Program Guides Evaluation Updates Summaries

C. Updates: Evaluation Design and Methodology

Overview. In this section we describe updates to evaluation design and methodology for inclusion. These updates are designed to increase the rigor and relevance of scientific evidence in SEL program evaluations. The updates include: (1) evaluation criteria related to ESSA, and (2) use of independent evaluator(s).

Evaluation Update 1: Evaluation Criteria Related to ESSA

Three interrelated updates are related to ESSA: (a) ratings of alignment to ESSA standards, (b) a minimum analytic sample size of 100 participants, and (c) inclusion of appropriate methods for handling sample attrition. ***The latter two updates (i.e., minimum sample size, and handling attrition) are required for all programs to be included in the Program Guide. Existing programs that do not meet these two requirements will be removed from the Program Guide.*** These programs may reapply for inclusion when documentation showing that these requirements are met is provided. Below we offer an overview of ESSA criteria and a description and rationale for the related evaluation criteria updates to the Program Guide.

Overview of ESSA Criteria. ESSA criteria draw from the Institute of Educational Sciences' (IES) What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Version 3 (Institute of Educational Science, 2019). ESSA's guidance for program selection involves a tiered system of criteria for choosing evidence-based interventions at four evidence levels:

- ***Tier 1 - Strong evidence.*** A well-implemented experimental study following a randomized control trial showing statistically significant positive effects of the intervention using a large multisite sample that represents the target population to receive the intervention.
- ***Tier 2 - Moderate evidence.*** A well-implemented quasi-experimental study with similar comparison groups (through matching and/or statistical controls) showing statistically significant positive effects of the intervention using a large multisite sample that represents the target population to receive the intervention.
- ***Tier 3 - Promising evidence.*** A well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias that shows statistically significant positive effects of the intervention.
- ***Tier 4 - Demonstrates a rationale.*** A well-specified logic model informed by research or evaluation that suggests how the intervention is likely to improve student outcomes along with an effort to study the effects of the intervention.

Historically, the Program Guide has always included some criteria from Tiers 1 and 2 (e.g., a well-implemented experimental or quasi-experimental study with similar comparison groups showing statistically significant positive effects of the intervention). However, the federal definition of strong or moderate evidence under ESSA also involves a minimum analytic sample size of 350 and a multisite sample that represents the target population to receive the intervention that has not been part of the Program Guides.

Evaluation Update 1a: Adherence to full ESSA Criteria. Updates to the Program Guide will document each program's level of adherence to the full ESSA criteria for strong or moderate evidence in four areas: (1) a well-implemented experimental or quasi-experimental study showing statistically significant positive effects of the intervention, (2) a minimum analytic sample size of 350, (3) evaluations conducted at multiple sites, and (4) evaluation samples that are representative of the intervention target population and location. **Although the Guide will report on each program in terms of its adherence to ESSA standards of evidence, programs *will not be excluded* from the Program Guide based on this criterion.** However, the evaluation description and rating tables will identify programs that meet **full ESSA criteria**.

Rationale. According to ESSA guidance, programs with strong or moderate evidence (Tiers 1 and 2) should be employed when possible because they have been proven effective and, therefore, are more likely to improve theoretically meaningful student outcomes. On this score, *RAND's Companion Guide to Social and Emotional Learning under ESSA* (Wrabel et al., 2018) notes the following:

> "We recommend that decisionmakers strive to identify SEL interventions addressing their local social and emotional needs that are supported by Tier I or II evidence. SEL interventions supported by these higher evidence tiers are more likely to improve student outcomes because they have been shown to be effective in a previous context using high-quality research methods" (Wrabel et al., 2018, p. 20).

In addition to meeting rigorous standards for proven effectiveness, another practical reason why ESSA evidence standards are considered in this update is that federal funds are increasingly tied to the requirement that education programs meet ESSA evidence criteria (Grant et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2017; Melnick et al., 2017). Therefore, achieving greater correspondence between evaluation criteria in the Guide and ESSA evidence criteria would allow users to select evidence-based SEL programs that are also eligible for certain federal funding streams.

However, the program review panel noted that there is sometimes a difference between federal and state criteria for meeting ESSA requirements. Programs should be aware of the ESSA requirements for the state(s) in which they operate.

Evaluation Update 1b. Minimum Final Analytic Sample Size of 100. Updates to the Program Guide require that all programs have at least one evaluation with a minimum final analytic sample size of 100 participants (i.e., 100 is the total number of participants across the program and control groups).

Rationale. Analytic sample size is defined as the number of participants involved in the evaluation's statistical analyses. Sample size is an important criterion for evaluation because it impacts statistical power—the ability to observe relationships that are likely not due to chance (Cohen, 2013). Moreover, a small sample size can introduce bias in parameter estimates and standard errors leading to erroneous conclusions about program impacts (Maxwell, Kelley, Rausch, 2008).

Various standards can be applied to determine adequate sample size, and, for example, ESSA evidence criteria call for a minimal sample size of 350 participants (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). A sample size of 350 allows high power to detect smaller effect sizes (e.g., .30) common in school-based research. The CASEL review panel noted that, at present, a limited number of SEL programs have carried out evaluations with sample sizes that would meet this ESSA criterion. An analytic sample size of at least 100 participants is feasible for many SEL program evaluations. The basis for a minimum final sample size of 100 followed from a review of the sample sizes of all programs in the 2013 and 2015 Program Guides. Therefore, the requirement of 100 or more participants simultaneously recognizes where the field is currently and calls for an advancement to meet a minimum evaluation standard. However, it is important to note that a sample size of 100 provides limited power to detect smaller effects, and it does not meet ESSA evidence criteria requiring a sample size of 350. Therefore, as noted above, the evaluation description and rating tables will identify programs that meet full criteria for ESSA.

Evaluation Update 1c. Methods for Handling Sample Attrition. Updates to the Program Guide require that all programs employ and report appropriate methods for handling sample attrition.

Rationale. Sample attrition is common in research that tracks participants over time. Attrition can lead to analytic problems of low power and bias described above. To retain a minimum analytic sample size, evaluators are encouraged to use appropriate methods for handling sample attrition (e.g., multiple imputation methods). Therefore, updates to the Program Guide will require programs to provide details on analytic sample size and sample attrition and employ appropriate methods to address sample attrition.

Evaluation Update 2. Independent Evaluator(s)

Updates to the Program Guide will document whether the program evaluation was carried out by independent evaluator(s). ***This update will not affect whether a program receives SELect status.***

Rationale. An independent evaluation helps to reduce potential bias and ensure quality and reliability of SEL program evaluation findings. In an independent evaluation, the evaluator(s) are qualified experts able to provide an unbiased assessment of the program. Independent evaluators are assumed to be neutral with respect to findings pertaining to the program's functioning and effectiveness. This ordinarily means the evaluators are not personally invested in the program's development or administration and have no financial stake in the outcome of the evaluation.

When program evaluators have personal, professional, or financial ties to the outcome of an evaluation, the potential for bias exists. Evaluation bias can occur when the evaluator(s) are not able to render an impartial assessment of the program's impact, or the evaluator impacts the program's delivery in ways that make it unlikely findings can be replicated under "real world" conditions. In the first case, this may stem from bias in decision-making when the evaluation is done "in house" (e.g., school personnel may be apt see positive results if they both implement and evaluate their own SEL program). In the second case, this could result from atypical positive impacts on implementation (e.g., program developers may be more effective at implementing their own programs than could be expected without their involvement).

Several evaluations have shown that involvement of the program developer in the evaluation process can bias results toward more positive (favorable) outcomes (Eisner, 2009; Perlis, Perlis, Wu, Hwang, Joseph, & Nierenberg, 2005; St. Pierre, Osgood, Mincemoyer, Kaltreider, & Kauk, 2005). Research on evaluator bias in SEL program research is limited. However, it is not uncommon for SEL program developers to be implementers and evaluators of their own programs (Wigglesworth, Lendrum, Oldfied, Scott, Bokkel, Tate, & Emory 2016). Therefore, to help ensure the most accurate and replicable results, updates to the Program Guides will include a rating of whether programs employ an independent evaluator(s) to carry out the program evaluation.

D. Evaluation Updates: Student and Institutional Outcomes

Overview. In this section, we describe updates to evaluation criteria pertaining to student and institutional outcomes. Following Figure 1 (p. 12), **student outcomes** involve the development of social and emotional competencies and related short- and long-term outcomes (e.g., positive attitudes toward self, academic engagement, and school, such as racial/ethnic identity development and perceived belonging at school). **Institutional outcomes** involve conditions of learning such as school climate and equitable policies and practices. However, as noted in Figure 1, student and institutional outcomes are interdependent and can have reciprocal influence on one another over time. For example, a positive school climate can increase students' perceived belonging to school. Likewise, students who feel they belong at school may behave more positively, which can contribute to perceptions of a positive school climate. ***As a part of describing the specific outcome updates, CASEL emphasizes the importance of three foci relevant to multiple student and institutional outcomes included in the 2021 Program Guide: educational equity, a developmental perspective, and including student perspectives.*** These foci are described below and then identified in conjunction with specific student and institutional outcome updates.

Educational equity. SEL programs vary in terms of the degree to which equity is addressed (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Williams, 2019), and there has been insufficient attention to equity as an outcome in SEL research. An equity lens recognizes that SEL takes place in the context of a socially stratified society. Educational equity means that, "...every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background, or family income" (Jagers et al., 2019, p. 163).

Educational equity is fundamental to ethically assessing SEL—practices and competencies—and interpreting SEL data (The National Practitioner Advisory Group, 2019). Indeed, Jagers, Rivas-Drake, and Borowski (2018) view SEL as having the potential to help reduce racial and class inequities and oppression. To this end, they describe transformative SEL as "...a process whereby students and teachers build strong, respectful relationships founded on an appreciation of similarities and differences; learn to critically examine root causes of inequity; and develop collaborative solutions to personal, community, and social problems." (p. 3). Therefore, SEL program evaluations should include outcomes and corresponding assessments of how students perceive, affect, are affected by, and can act to change educational inequity (Comer, 2009; Gregory and Ferguson, 2017). In this regard, SEL approaches that foster positive identity, agency, school connectedness, and school climate are particularly important.

The Program Guide review panel also noted that issues of educational equity may pertain to a variety of student characteristics including race/ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, socioeconomic status, health, and risk status. Therefore, across student outcomes, SEL program evaluations are encouraged to assess educational equity to understand and report which students benefit from the intervention.

Developmental perspective. A developmental perspective on SEL acknowledges that social and emotional competencies are comprised of dynamic, complex knowledge, skills, and attitudes that change over time (National Practitioner Advisory Group, 2019). Because developmental level (often described by grade level or age) is tied to what a child should know and be able to do with respect to SEL, developmentally appropriate assessments are needed to capture different social and emotional capabilities and needs throughout schooling and into adulthood.

A developmental lens on SEL recognizes that what stays the same and what grows and changes over time may be different (Denham, 2018). What often stays the same are the broad SECs that apply to different ages and grade levels (e.g., self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making). What does change across childhood and adolescence is the ability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behavior within and across SECs to succeed at important age-differentiated developmental tasks. For example, social awareness tasks progress from following social rules like taking turns (preschool), to understanding appropriate emotional expression across social settings (elementary school), to comprehending more complex emotional situations (middle school), to recognizing diverse social-cultural perspectives (high school).

Developmental tasks should inform the design of SEL outcome assessment. However, which outcomes should be prioritized needs to be determined by diverse stakeholders who understand the local needs, assets, and culture of the community. Moreover, when and how frequently these aspects are assessed should be guided by a theory of change that articulates why, how, and when desired changes are expected. Finally, the age of the respondent should be considered when choosing such assessments (Assessment Work Group, 2019). For example, whereas younger children typically require external raters (e.g., teachers, observers) to assess their social and emotional competencies, older children and adolescents can complete self-questionnaires about their own competencies.

Inclusion of student perspective. Changes in social-cognitive development and school/class structures, especially during adolescence, allow youth to serve as important informants of their own development. For example, advances in cognition allow adolescents to think in abstract, multidimensional, and differentiated ways. Compared to children's more concrete self-descriptions, adolescents can reason abstractly and hypothetically about themselves and others (Eisenberg, Morris, McDaniel, & Spinrad, 2004; Steinberg, 2005).

At the same time, the structure of schooling often changes from childhood to adolescence. In contrast to the self-contained elementary school classroom, the school day of middle and high school students involves several different teachers in multiple classrooms throughout the school building. As a result, middle and high school students interact with a broader range of peers and adults. Also, secondary school teachers typically have a more limited range of experience with individual students during the school day compared to elementary school teachers. Therefore, overall, secondary school educators are likely to be less knowledgeable about the range of behaviors students show during the school day and less able to report on such behaviors accurately.

Both issues – adolescent ability to self-report and limits on secondary teachers' knowledge of students – support the inclusion of student-reported outcomes during adolescence.

Evaluation Update 3. Student Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Competence

Updates to the Program Guide will rate whether programs target and assess student improvement in both intrapersonal and interpersonal competence aligned to CASEL's updated definitions of the five competencies. Improvements in intrapersonal competence mean significant, positive impacts to either self-awareness or self-management. Improvements in interpersonal competence mean significant, positive impacts to either social awareness or relationships. These competencies are defined below.

Rationale. Social and emotional competence (SEC) is the capacity to coordinate cognition, affect, and behavior that allows individuals to thrive in diverse cultures and contexts and achieve specific tasks and positive developmental outcomes (Elias, Weissberg, Dodge, Hawkins, Kendall et al., 1994). One aim of school-based SEL programs is to develop students' SECs.

Although there are many ways to define and organize SECs (Berg, Osher, Same, Nolan, Benson, & Jacobs, 2017), CASEL has identified five core SEC clusters: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2003; Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015). These clusters emphasize the importance of developing both intrapersonal competencies that include self-awareness and self-management and interpersonal competencies that include social awareness and relationship skills. Updated definitions of the CASEL's SEC clusters are summarized below.

SELF-AWARENESS: The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts. This includes capacities to recognize one's strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose. Such as:

- Integrating personal and social identities
- Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets
- Identifying one's emotions
- Demonstrating honesty and integrity
- Linking feelings, values, and thoughts
- Examining prejudices and biases
- Experiencing self-efficacy
- Having a growth mindset
- Developing interests and a sense of purpose

SELF-MANAGEMENT: The abilities to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. This includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation and agency to accomplish personal/collective goals. Such as:

- Managing one's emotions
- Identifying and using stress-management strategies
- Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation
- Setting personal and collective goals
- Using planning and organizational skills
- Showing the courage to take initiative
- Demonstrating personal and collective agency

SOCIAL AWARENESS: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts. This includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. Such as:

- Taking others' perspectives
- Recognizing strengths in others
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Showing concern for the feelings of others
- Understanding and expressing gratitude
- Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones
- Recognizing situational demands and opportunities
- Understanding the influences of organizations/systems on behavior

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS: The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups. This includes the capacities to communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, work collaboratively to problem solve and negotiate conflict constructively, navigate settings with differing social and cultural demands and opportunities, provide leadership, and seek or offer help when needed. Such as:

- Communicating effectively
- Developing positive relationships
- Demonstrating cultural competency
- Practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving
- Resolving conflicts constructively
- Resisting negative social pressure
- Showing leadership in groups
- Seeking or offering support and help when needed
- Standing up for the rights of others

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. This includes the capacities to consider ethical standards and safety concerns, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being. Such as:

- Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness
- Identifying solutions for personal and social problems
- Learning to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts
- Anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions
- Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside & outside of school
- Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being
- Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts

Several common SEL skills involved in interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies are found in research on SEL program impacts—e.g., identifying emotions, perspective taking, self-control, interpersonal problem solving, conflict resolution and coping strategies (Mahoney et al., 2019). Research shows SEL programs can have a powerful effect on promoting such competencies at post-intervention (Durlak et al., 2011) and that the initial gains in SEL competence can persist over time (Taylor et al., 2017). Moreover, improved SEL competence at post intervention predict the long-term adjustment of students in terms of more positive and fewer negative indicators of well-being (Taylor et al., 2017).

Evaluation Update 3a. Student Identity. Updates to the Middle and High School Program Guide will accept improvement in student identity as a student outcome for SELect status.

In its updating of the CASEL 5 framework, CASEL has explicitly highlighted identity as an integral aspect in building of one's self-awareness. Identity is a major developmental task associated with mental health, self-esteem, achievement, interpersonal relationships, and productive citizenship in later life (Byrd & Chavous, 2006; Seller et al., 2006; Sherrod & Lauckhardt, 1998). It involves personal assessment of both "Who am I?" and "Who am I in this social context?," and these questions become paramount during adolescence (Erikson, 1980). The process of identity development is systemic, involving interactions between biological, psychological, social, cultural, and historical components. The individual is influenced by a myriad of changing and dynamic factors but is also an active agent in the construction of identity. Thus, individuals contribute to their sense of self in contexts that can activate, hinder, or foster the identity process (Brittain, 2011).

With respect to SEL, identity is reflective of SECs, including self- and social awareness and relationships, and attitudes about self. For example, self-awareness underscores that young people's sense of self includes cultural values and orientations and collective identities, such as their ethnic-racial group, socioeconomic status, and gender. Ethnic-racial identity (ERI) is an expression of communalism that refers to the importance and meaning associated with ethnic or racial group membership, and the processes by which youth arrive at such meaning (Sellers et al., 1998). A healthy sense of ERI is important for psychological, academic, and social well-being (Rivas-Drake, Seaton, et al., 2014; Rivas-Drake, Syed, et al., 2014; Smith and Silva, 2011). Some components of ERI relevant to self-awareness include beliefs about the importance of ethnicity or race to the sense of self as a person (centrality) and degree to which group membership is seen as positive and affirming. ERI also has implications for beliefs about personal and collective efficacy and agency (see below). Furthermore, it occurs through a developmental process, which includes youths' inquiry into the meaning of their group membership (exploration) and developing a sense of clarity about its role in their lives (French et al., 2000, 2006; Rivas-Drake, Seaton et al., 2014; Rivas-Drake & Witherspoon, 2013; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014).

Several programs have been developed to promote ethnic/racial identity of Black adolescents and some have positive effects on ERI (Lloyd & Williams, 2016). There are fewer programs targeting Latinx youth. However, a recent efficacy trial found that a classroom-based intervention promoted identity exploration for both youth of color and their white classmates (Dee & Penner, 2016; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2017). Additionally, there is growing evidence of the positive academic and social impacts of brief interventions into stereotype threats experienced by various marginalized groups (Walton & Cohen, 2011).

Finally, consistent with the emphasis on including student perspective, this body of work shows that adolescents are capable informants when it comes to their own identities (Jones & Kahn, 2017). Therefore, student reports of identity should be emphasized in assessments. However, in selecting outcomes and assessments, it is important to note that

identity measures are multifaceted and nuanced according to the theoretical bases on which they were derived. For example, when examining ERI, Sellers et al. (1998) recognizes centrality (i.e., the extent to which a person defines himself or herself with regard to race), regard (i.e., feelings of positivity and negativity towards one's race), and ideology (i.e., individual's beliefs, opinions, and attitudes about how members of the race should act). These facets, and their components, may be promoted by SEL programs in different ways (Jagers et al., 2019). Therefore, measures should be chosen carefully according to the specific program goals, research questions, groups, and social-cultural contexts of interest.

Evaluation Update 3b. Student Agency. Updates to the Middle and High School Program Guide will accept improvement in student agency as a student outcome for SELect status.

Agentic students are inspired to make things happen in their own lives and the world around them (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sokol et al., 2015). This includes youth developing plans, making decisions, or committing to different courses of action aimed at achieving goals of personal importance and reflecting on regulating processes toward those goals. Agency connects to multiple SECs including self-awareness, self-management, social relationships, and responsible decision-making. *With reference to educational equity, student agency is vital to co-creating more inclusive, equitable schools and communities.*

The current context of U.S. schooling necessitates youth of color and other marginalized groups to be more agentic to become problem-focused and actively engaged in identifying situational or societal challenges, identifying the individual and collective solutions implied, and actively participating in transformative SEL (Berkel et al., 2010; Jagers et al., 2018; Neblett et al., 2012).

Update 3c: School connectedness. Updates to the Program Guide will rate whether programs target and assess improvement in student-perceived connectedness to school as defined by school engagement and school belonging.

Developing a positive connection to school (i.e., engagement and belonging) is a cornerstone of high-quality SEL programming and a predictor of long-term adjustment (e.g., Taylor et al., 2017). While student engagement has multiple features, the construct refers to the intensity and emotional quality of a student's involvement in the initiation of and follow-through of learning activities (Skinner et al., 2016, 1993). Engagement has been shown as a strong predictor of students' grades, test scores, retention, and graduation. Just as important, belonging refers to the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment (Goodenow & Grady, 1993). How students perceive, think, and feel about their educational environment and experiences impacts their classroom and school engagement, which, in turn, affects school performance and long-term educational success (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004).

In this context, the need for equity-focused interpersonal competencies, including social awareness and relationship skills, is brought to light by the fact that students from diverse racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds are often placed at risk by the dominant culture of schools. This can lead to stress, school alienation, and disengagement that undermine education success (Allen et al., 2013; Yeager et al., 2017). Moreover, growing global diversity implies potential for greater interaction among people from various racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Differences, rather than commonalities, among groups are often accentuated. This limits the possibilities for creating educational arrangements where students feel supported and engaged. To facilitate such connectedness, the school setting must be an inclusive, safe, and constructive learning environment for all members.

Student perception is key to assessing the facets of school connectedness effectively. For instance, discrepancies between teacher-reported and student-reported academic engagement, emotional engagement, and school belonging have been observed (Appleton & Lawrenz 2011; Skinner et al., 2008; Nichols, 2006; 2008). Student-reported academic engagement and school belonging are associated with positive school achievement, lower dropout rates, and more positive peer relationships (Fredricks et al., 2004). Moreover, DePaoli and colleagues' retrospective report (2018) of young people's perceptions of high school found that many believed their school could have done more to actively engage them in their own learning processes. Taken together, SEL programs should aim to facilitate and assess the school connectedness of all students with attention to perspectives of students from diverse racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

With regard to assessing relevant outcomes, there are guides and repositories for measuring both engagement (Fredricks, McColskey, Meli, Mordica, Montrosse, & Mooney, 2011) and belonging (e.g., International Belonging Research Laboratory, 2020). We believe it is important to emphasize psychometric properties and the use of established measures. Using measures whose psychometric properties have been reviewed ensures psychological constructs are measured with optimum reliability and validity.

Evaluation Update 4. Student Behavioral Outcomes and SELect Status

Updates to the Program Guide will require SELect programs to demonstrate a significant impact on a behavioral student outcome. Programs that only show significant impact on academic outcomes will be designated as Promising.

Rationale. Improving SECs is a basic goal of SEL programs. Impacts on academic performance alone do not capture changes in students' SECs or speak to the uniqueness of an SEL program. Although changes in academic performance (e.g., GPA, standardized test scores) are desirable and often observed in high-quality SEL interventions, they do not show that students' SECs or other social and emotional outcomes have been impacted through programming. Therefore, academic performance alone will be considered a Promising outcome, and programs must also evaluate and demonstrate a social and emotional behavioral outcome to be SELect. For example, if a middle school program only demonstrates significant outcomes in academic performance, the program would need to also demonstrate significant impact on behavioral student outcomes (i.e., improved positive social behavior, reduced problem behavior or emotional distress) to be considered SELect.

This update recognizes that states, districts, and schools invest time, effort, and finances to raise academic performance. Introducing student behavioral outcomes as a requirement for SELect programs may lead to increased evaluated-related expense and/or require additional time for assessment. However, it is important that SEL programs show impacts beyond academic outcomes.

Evaluation Update 5. Classroom and School Climate

Updates to the Program Guide will accept improvement in student perceptions of classroom and school climate as a student outcome for SELect status.

Rationale. School climate "…reflects how members of the school community experience the school, including interpersonal relationships, teacher and other staff practices, and organizational arrangements. School climate includes factors that serve as conditions for learning and that support physical and emotional safety, connection and support, and engagement" (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 4).

Key elements of school climate connect with SEL including emotional and physical safety, connectedness and support, challenge and engagement, and peer and adult SECs (Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), 2019). Indeed, as Osher and Berg (2017) observe, "School climate is the collective phenomenon that both reflects and creates the conditions for the development of social, emotional, and academic competence in both adults and children" (p. 4). For example, climate provides the conditions of learning in which SEL takes place while student and staff SECs create the social environment needed to support positive conditions of learning through caring relationships, direct instruction, modeling, and reinforcement (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). School climate and SEL are also shaped by policies and procedures at higher levels of organization including the district and state. Thus, climate, SEL, and student learning are inextricably intertwined, and should be aligned in a coordinated, systematic effort across the entire educational system (NCSEAD, 2018).

School climate plays a critical role in educational equity. For instance, students of color are more apt to experience bias, harsh disciplinary practices, low expectations, and microaggressions that can diminish their school connectedness (Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Aspen Institute, 2018). This, in turn, can contribute to chronic absenteeism, poor achievement, and school dropout. However, a positive school climate allows students and teachers to build trusting relationships and positive expectations, and provide the support needed to create equitable learning opportunities that encourage the academic success of all students.

Student perception of school climate is critical and should be assessed when feasible and appropriate. This includes students' attitudes toward school, levels of engagement and school bonding, as well as perceptions of physical and emotional safety, supportive teacher and peer relationships, dimensions of racial school climate (Byrd, 2017), cultural competence, cultural responsiveness, and academic challenge and high expectations (Osher & Berg, 2017).

Section III: Evidence and Rationale for Design Criteria Updates

This section focuses on changes to the required program design criteria for inclusion in the Program Guide. Key components of CASEL's program design review process, including new features of the review coding system and rationales for updates are described. CASEL's understanding of well-designed approaches to SEL has been informed through meta-analytic research (Durlak, et al., 2011; Taylor, et al, 2017), literature reviews (e.g., Mahoney et al., forthcoming), and over 20 years of reviewing programs for the CASEL Program Guide.

A. Current Design Criteria

After a program meets the criteria from the outcome evaluation portion of the review process and is determined to satisfy either the SELect or Promising level of evidence, CASEL reviews and codes the program's design criteria followed by their documented implementation supports to determine if they meet CASEL design inclusion criteria for the Program Guide. Below is a summary of the current design criteria for SELect, Promising, and SEL-Supportive programming.

Current Design Criteria and Areas of Review

Below are the CASEL SELect criteria for well-designed school-based programs. Programs demonstrating these criteria intentionally and comprehensively promote students' development across the CASEL five competency clusters, provide opportunities for practice, and are offered over multiple years.

To qualify for a SELect design review designation, a program must have ALL the following features:

- ***School-Based and Designed to be Delivered to all Students.*** SEL programs in the Program Guide are designed for school-based settings, meaning they are for all students, regardless of risk status and implemented during regular school hours. For example, a program specifically designed for a particular subset of students would not qualify.
- ***Comprehensive.*** Comprehensive programming across five core social and emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making are demonstrated in the curriculum or approach.
- ***Grade-by-Grade Sequence.*** The program allows for sequenced programming for each grade level across the grade range covered. A program must either provide unique programming (e.g., separate curricula) for each grade within the grade range covered or provide guidance for how to implement the program in developmentally appropriate ways across multiple years.
- ***Approaches.*** Programs can be conceptualized as reflecting one or more of the following four approaches:
  - ***Free-standing lessons*** specifically and explicitly designed to enhance students' social and emotional competencies (e.g., such as a lesson that teaches students strategies for coping with stress or anxiety).
  - ***Teaching practices*** designed to create optimal conditions for the development of social and emotional competence, including strategies that promote reflection by students or build positive and supportive relationships among teachers, students, and families.

- ***Integration of SEL*** (lessons and/or practices) and academic instruction (such as an ELA, social studies, or mathematics curriculum that incorporates SEL lessons or practices).
- ***Organizational strategies*** designed to create systemic structures and supports to promote students' social and emotional development, including a schoolwide culture conducive to learning. Such approaches should also ensure that evidence-based classroom or schoolwide practices or programs are used to support student social and emotional development.

- ***Opportunities to practice social and emotional skills.*** The CASEL Program Guide team reviews the extent to which the programs provide meaningful, authentic opportunities for students to practice new skills. For self-management and relationship skills, practice should have students participate in active learning activities, such as role-play, using breathing techniques, or using "I feel" statements with a peer. Opportunities to practice for self-awareness, social awareness, and responsible decision-making involve reflective activities, such as journaling about one's feelings, discussing with a peer how they might act in a given situation, or reflecting on choices they've made.

- ***SAFE.*** Programs include each of the evidence-based strategies represented by the acronym SAFE. These strategies include the use of a sequenced step-by-step training approach, emphasizing active forms of learning by having youth practice new skills, focusing specific time and attention on skill development, and are explicit in defining the SEL skills they attempt to promote (Durlak & Weissberg, 2012).
  - ***Sequenced.*** Connected and coordinated activities to foster skills development.
  - ***Active.*** Active forms of learning to help students master new skills.
  - ***Focused.*** Containing a component that emphasizes developing personal and social skills.
  - ***Explicit.*** Targeting specific social and emotional skills.

A program receives a Promising designation from design review if it meets most, but not all of the above SELect Criteria. See common reasons for a program receiving a Promising design designation below:

- Program does not comprehensively cover all five CASEL competencies.
  > For example, a program that focuses solely on intrapersonal competencies (self-awareness and self-management) but not interpersonal competencies (social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making)
- Program provides grade-banded curricula
  > For example, a program offers a single set of lessons for grades K-2 or insufficient guidance for scoping the program's implementation over multiple grade levels.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to practice competencies.

A program receives an **SEL-Supportive** designation if it does not meet critical components of CASEL's model for SEL programming but offers high-quality support for a school's SEL implementation.

In addition to the above criteria, CASEL rates programs for systemic approaches. While not currently an exclusionary criterion, CASEL believes that systemic approaches to SEL that are carried out in a multilayered, coordinated educational system of relationships help to support, integrate, and sustain social and emotional learning across contexts and over time (e.g., Mahoney et al., forthcoming; Mart et al., 2015; Meyers et al., 2018; Oberle, Domitrovich, Meyers, & Weissberg, 2016). Systemic SEL can and does take place across multiple contexts, each day, and all year around. For example, SEL at the classroom level can be embedded in coordinated, whole-child, schoolwide approaches.

Settings. In addition to the school setting, SEL can be supported and reinforced in the home. Likewise, multiple settings in the community, including service-learning programs and organized out-of-school activities (e.g., afterschool and summer programs, community-based organizations), provide opportunities for young people to learn and practice social and emotional skills with others as well as to apply these skills to improve their school and community. The Program Guide rates strategies within four settings—classroom, school, family, and community—to determine opportunities for students and adults to generalize and practice their skills. Strategies for each setting are reported in the CASEL guide as "minimal," "adequate," or "extensive." Programs share this information, along with specific examples, through a settings questionnaire.

Finally, as a service to the field, we review and provide information regarding the following components in the program guide:

- ***Grade Range Covered.*** The full range of grade levels the program targets.
- ***Grades Evaluated.*** The grade levels of all students included in the program's qualifying evaluation(s).
- ***Number of SEL Lessons.*** The average number of sessions each year. A session is defined as a set of activities designed to take place in a single time period.
- ***Assessment tools for monitoring implementation and student behavior.*** The availability of tools to monitor implementation, either through teacher self-report measures or assessments completed by observers.

B. Process for Updating Design Criteria

To update the Program Guide's design criteria, the CASEL review team engaged in three research activities between 2018-2020: empirical literature reviews, informational interviews with a subset of program providers to better understand the role of equity within SELect programs, and analyses of strategies in recent programming.

CASEL has historically documented equity-related strategies such as elevating student voice, culturally responsive practices, and translations of tools and resources. Prior to the winter 2019 program review cycle, the review team conducted a literature reviews to identify the most common strategies for equity and what made them effective. Additionally, the team drew on examples of equity strategies from previously reviewed programs. This process resulted in expanding our coding process to look for the following strategies that promote educational equity, beginning with the winter 2019 review cycle (defined and described in section C):

- Understanding context
- Working with bias
- Translation into a language beyond English
- Student as change agent

Informational interviews with personnel from 10 SELect programs were conducted.[4] These conversations were approached as ongoing thought-partnerships with the following aims: (a) to understand the approaches high-quality programs (as evidenced by their SELect status) use to promote equitable learning experiences and outcomes, and (b) to discuss ways such transformative SEL can be effectively represented in the Program Guide. These interviews helped build CASEL's understanding of the current state of the field related to strategies for educational equity in SEL programs.

Through our informational interviews with providers of SELect programs, we learned that effective strategies for understanding context and working with bias are most likely to be found in training and implementation support materials, while translations and strategies for student as change agent are found in curricular materials (e.g., teacher guide, student materials). Based on this research, these new equity-aligned strategies will continue to be documented and reviewed as part of the full design coding process, including reviewing training and implementation support materials and interviews with providers.

C. Updates: Components of Program Design Review

Overview. This section describes updates to components of the program design review. These updates include opportunities for adult SEL and strategies to promote educational equity. The updates and their rationales are presented below.

CASEL has a long-standing commitment to issues of educational equity. Teaching and promoting adult SEL is viewed as critical for effective training and implementation. Additionally, equity-related aspects of adult SEL (e.g., working with bias, exploration of one's own identities, etc.) must be present and purposeful for educators to effectively facilitate strategies that support educational equity in their practice. Although CASEL's Program Review process has historically reviewed and documented aspects of educational equity (i.e., coding for "Guidelines, instructions or materials that explicitly support cultural and/or linguistic sensitivity during implementation"), advances in the field call for updates that explicitly include effective strategies to support educational equity.

How an equity focus translates to curriculum and teaching practices has been an ongoing discussion in the field of education for decades, leading to continuous updates in research and practice. For example, Ladson-Billings (1992) posited the importance of teachers to aspire to culturally relevant pedagogy, which was defined by students' academic success, development and maintenance of cultural competence, and development of critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. Hammond (2015) framed *culturally responsive teaching* as practices that facilitate culturally and linguistically diverse students becoming "independent learners," capable of, and motivated toward, critical thinking, collaboration, and problem solving through their own agency (as opposed to solely at the behest of their teacher). More recently, the Jagers et al. (2019) discussion of transformative SEL highlights culturally responsive education as an approach to transformative SEL; and offers a bridge from SEL strategies to the promotion of educational equity. Transformative SEL is a process whereby students and teachers build strong, respectful relationships founded on an appreciation of similarities and differences; learn to critically examine root causes of inequity; and develop collaborative solutions to personal, community, and social problems. Therefore, we are focusing on deepening our framing of adult SEL to illustrate this bridging, especially through our review of training materials.

4 CASEL would like to acknowledge the following collaborators in our field-based continuous improvement efforts: Open Circle: Kamilah Drummond-Forrester MA, CAGS, Director of Open Circle, a program of the Wellesley Centers for Women at Wellesley College; Facing History and Ourselves; Manner of the Heart: Jill Rigby Garner, Founder/Executive Director; EL Education: Ryan Maxwell, Managing Director, Partnerships; Christina Riley, Director of Curriculum Design; Allison Lee, Senior Research Scientist; Responsive Classroom ®/ Center for Responsive Schools, Inc.; PBLWorks.

Additionally, a key learning from the informational interviews conducted with representatives of SELect programs was the necessity of a deliberate approach on the part of the program provider to incorporate strategies for educational equity. Because promoting equity through SEL looks, sounds, and feels different depending on a myriad of contextual factors of a school community, there is a risk that jargon can contribute to essentializing a universal definition for "best practice" with equity. If a provider states that strategies within their program support educational equity, it would be expected that they came to this conclusion through an intentional process, such as setting an equity mission and vision, performing a literature review, and/or consulting with experts.

To advance SEL to support equitable outcomes for all students, the most recent review cycle of the Program Guide included criteria for coding program "strategies that support educational equity." The criteria are based, in part, on Zaretta Hammond's *Distinctions of Equity* framework (Hammond, 2017), which describes culturally responsive teaching practices as vehicles to move toward equity. This work guides the current design update that will review and document programs on four strategies to promote educational equity: understanding context, working with bias, translating materials in a language beyond English, and students as change agents. Programs will be asked to document which of the strategies are presented and to provide examples and rationale on a "strategies for educational equity" questionnaire.

Design Update 1. Opportunities for adult SEL

Since 2015, the Program Guide has provided opportunities for programs to comment on their strategies that support adult SEL. Updates to the Program Guide will document opportunities for adult SEL more holistically and rigorously through a review of the training and implementation support materials, specifically documenting a program's approach to understanding context and working with bias.

Rationale. There are several evidence-based reasons to intentionally promote adult social and emotional competence development including: building student SECs, reducing teacher stress and burnout and its impact on students, fostering teacher identity that supports culturally responsive education, supporting effective SEL program implementation, and developing educational equity.

Building student SECs. To teach students the skills that promote SECs, teachers must first understand SEL and develop the competencies themselves (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). Teachers' SECs directly impact students' SECs through their behaviors and the climate of the learning environment. Socially and emotionally competent teachers set the tone of the classroom by developing supportive and encouraging relationships with their students. They build a classroom environment that capitalizes on student strengths and abilities. They co-establish behavioral norms with students that promote intrinsic motivation, teach students to resolve conflicts peacefully, and encourage cooperation. Finally, they serve as positive, competent role models for students by demonstrating respect, good communication, and prosocial conduct (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Most educational systems assume that teachers already have these competencies, understand SEL, and can teach and model them in ways that foster warm and supportive classroom environments and impart SECs to students. However, teachers vary in the range and depth of skills they possess across different SECs. Although adults can develop these competencies (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013), they need to be built intentionally, assessed regularly, and continuously improved (Bouffard, 2018).

Teacher stress and burnout. Being an educator is important and challenging work. Recent surveys find over half of teachers and principals report experiencing high levels of stress several days a week (Jones et al., 2013). Educator stress can lead to burnout, career dissatisfaction, turnover, and dropout resulting in negative consequences for students (Greenberg et al., 2016). For example, "burnout cascade" occurs when educators lack the resources to manage and cope with the social and emotional challenges in their work environment (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Levels of emotional stress rise while the classroom climate deteriorates. Increases in student behavior problems follow as the classroom becomes less manageable. Moreover, stress in the classroom seems to be contagious (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Stressed-out teachers tend to have students that are stressed and experience more mental health, interpersonal, and behavior problems.

A focus on adult SEL can help to prevent educator burnout cascade. SEL programs that support and train educators can reduce stress and job-related anxiety and depression and increase teachers' job control, warmth, and high-quality interactions with students (Greenberg et al., 2016). Such changes are linked to students' school connectedness and success in the form of positive social, emotional, and academic outcomes.

Teacher identity and cultural responsiveness. Adult SEL also connects to teacher identity and mindset that affect culturally relevant education practices. As a part of the update process, informational interviews with SELect program providers revealed robust programmatic approaches to equity begin with adult SEL during initial training, often in the form of self-reflection around sociocultural identity (self-awareness) and how this may impact the way educators view and approach students (social awareness). Such self- and social awareness may help educators understand how their cultural beliefs and unintentional biases impact educational opportunities and discipline practices valuing certain culturally based forms of expression over others.

For example, many teachers hold negative stereotypes of culturally and linguistically diverse students, expecting less competent behavior and lower levels of academic performance (Weinstein, 2002). These low expectations can be thought of as mindsets and are often accompanied by microaggressions (Allen et al., 2013), a form of trauma, which divert students' cognitive resources from learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2018). This circumstance can lead to suboptimal learning opportunities including a curriculum that fails to reflect student community and culture, reduced feedback, and less demanding and engaging schoolwork (e.g., emphasis on rote memorization) (Osher et al., 2018).

For teachers working with culturally diverse students, Gay (2010) asserts that culturally responsive educators (CREs) act to replace deficit with affirming views of students and communities. For example, CREs focus on understanding the "how and why" of culture and difference, conduct critical analyses of textbooks and other materials, make pedagogical connections within the teaching context, and anticipate there will be critics of culturally responsive teaching. Based on work with urban elementary and high schools, Duncan-Andrade (2007) offer five pillars of effective culturally relevant practice linked to increased achievement: (1) being critically conscious of their students' potential as change agents, (2) their sense of responsibility to the community, (3) preparation for high-level classroom practice, (4) Socratic sensibility that supported reflection on their practice, and (5) commitment to building trust with students. This, of course, will look, sound, and feel differently depending on the grade level of the students. Others have suggested that teacher professional identity is linked to their sense of agency and belonging within their classrooms and schools (e.g., Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Lasky, 2005). Relatedly, a sense of teacher collective efficacy—a belief that a teaching staff can promote student growth and development—leads to higher student outcomes (e.g., Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000).

As mentioned previously, our informational interviews with SELect program providers and literature review (e.g., Jagers et al., 2019) pointed to a critical overlap between adult SEL, training, and promoting educational equity. This connection is mentioned here to be clear that educational equity is an additional reason for programs to engage in adult SEL. Specific strategies connected to educational equity are described in the next session.

SEL program implementation. Adult SEL also supports effective program implementation. This is shown, for example, through findings from CASEL's Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI). The CDI is a partnership with 20 mostly large, urban school districts that are systemically implementing evidence-based SEL through school, family, and community partnerships (CASEL, 2017). This work demonstrates the crucial role adult SEL plays in overall SEL implementation at both the school and district levels. At the school level, successful SEL implementation depends on how well staff work together to facilitate SEL instruction, foster a positive school community, and model social, emotional, and cultural competence. This calls on schools to focus on adults' professional growth as educators as well as their own social and emotional learning (Jones et al., 2018).

Design Update 2. Strategies that Support Educational Equity

Updates to the Program Guide include documenting program strategies that support educational equity, including a program's approach to understanding context and working with bias (found in training and implementation support materials) and translation of materials beyond English and strategies for students as change agents (found within curricular materials).

Rationale. Educational equity means that "every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background, or family income" (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Williams, 2019, p. 163). Educational equity requires adults and students to examine biases and interrupt inequitable practices to create inclusive, multicultural school environments that cultivate the interests and talents of children, youth, and adults from diverse backgrounds (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Borowski, 2018). Effective SEL approaches can help youth from historically marginalized groups to realize their fullest potential as contributing members of an increasingly complex and diverse global community. Accordingly, this update underscores that it is important for SEL programs to employ strategies that support equitable outcomes for students.

Below is more information on the strategies for educational equity found in curricular materials (translating materials beyond English and student as change agent). Strategies for understanding context and working with bias will be discussed in section D.

Design Update 2a. Translating materials beyond English. Updates to the Program Guide include documenting whether programs provide training and support for educational equity in the form of program materials that are translated and available in a language beyond English.

Rationale. Making program materials available in multiple languages recognizes the diversity of learners and supports SEL instruction and learning across multiple cultures and contexts. According to a report using data from the U.S. Census Bureau (Ingraham, 2019), roughly 15.3% of adult citizens in the United States speak a language other than English at home. When considering all U.S. residents ages 5 and up (both citizens and noncitizens), the rate is even higher with 21.6% (roughly 66 million people) primarily speaking a language other than English at home

(increasing from 11% in 1980). The increasing linguistic diversity in the United States can be a driver of educational inequities, so both educators and curriculum providers need to be responsive to the need for SEL materials to be translated for use in districts, schools, and classrooms with diverse student populations.

Programs should aim to translate program materials into languages beyond English to promote equitable access for students in their ability to engage with the curriculum. Importantly, in addition to student materials, all parent/caregiver-facing materials (e.g., progress reports, SEL activities to do at home, an overview of the concept of SEL, etc.), and community-facing materials (e.g., invitation to participate in a service-learning project, requests for volunteer opportunities) should be translated as well. According to CASEL's model, systemic SEL implementation requires promotion of SEL in family and community contexts. Translated materials promote equitable opportunities for students, families, and educators to contribute to a school's or district's climate and culture.

Design Update 2b. Student as change agent. Updates to the Program Guide include documenting whether programs provide training and support that encourages practices to support student voice and agency as change agents.

Rationale. People act when they believe that their voice and action can make a difference (e.g., Watts & Guessous, 2006). By encouraging student-initiated voice and action, SEL programs can empower students to become active change agents able to create more equitable conditions in their schools and communities. Indeed, some SEL programs incorporate schoolwide practices designed to promote positive and supportive relationships among teachers, students, and families that facilitate integration and extend the impact of SEL programs beyond the classroom. However, limited attention has been placed on explicit strategies to promote student agency, or on outcomes such as school and community building. In this regard, approaches to transformative SEL that include culturally infused SEL skill development, project-based learning, and youth participatory action research are of interest (Jagers et al., 2019). These approaches position students as experts on their own lived experience who can work with peers and adults to co-create solutions that foster educational equity.

Strategies promoting student's awareness of their capacity as change agents must purposefully encourage student agency in developmentally appropriate ways. To qualify as an equity strategy, there must be opportunities for students to "critically examine root causes of inequity" and/or "develop collaborative solutions to community and social problems" (Jagers, et al., 2019). These strategies should offer guidance for generalizing agency and voice to be powerful tools that can change the world.

Additionally, fostering equity through SEL suggests the need for good decision-making skills that position students (and adults) to engage in initiatives and to co-create structures and processes that are inclusive, equitable, and mutually supportive. As examples, students should be invited to build community actively and meaningfully at the level of the classroom, school, and neighborhood settings. Nurturing students' understanding of systemic or structural explanations for differential treatment and outcomes of people from diverse backgrounds, together with relationship skills, can be done in settings that are group-specific or those that include members of multiple ethnic/racial and socioeconomic groups.

Section IV: Evidence and Rationale for Updated Training and Implementation Support Review

This section focuses on changes to the required program implementation criteria for inclusion in the Program Guide. The success of a program depends on high-quality implementation. CASEL's understanding of high-quality implementation is based on research reviews of SEL programs (e.g., Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017), years of field testing as part of CASEL's Collaborating District Initiative with 20 mostly large, urban school districts that are systemically implementing evidence-based SEL through school, family, and community partnerships (CASEL, 2017a, 2017b), and over 20 years of reviewing programs for the CASEL Program Guides.

A. Current Implementation Criteria Review

After a program meets the criteria from the outcome evaluation of the review process and meets either the SELect or Promising level of evidence, CASEL reviews and codes the program's design and implementation supports to determine if it meets CASEL inclusion criteria for the Program Guide. To be included, a program must demonstrate the capacity to provide initial training and ongoing support to ensure sound implementation. Historically, CASEL has required that programs complete a short survey listing the implementation supports they offer. Below is a list of components included in the survey. Although each form of support listed is not required, CASEL sees them as features of high-quality implementation support. As a follow-up to the training and implementation support survey, the program design team conducts phone interviews that follow a standard protocol to discuss the program's recommended training model. Below are the categories we have historically included in the program provider survey.

- ***Initial training.*** The program's recommended training model, including information about the total number of days and the length of time require for training.
- ***Technical assistance and Implementation supports.*** Describes the major types of technical assistance and other supports shown to promote high-quality implementation and sustainability over time.
- ***Administrator support.*** A component of the recommended training model is designed specifically for school/district administrators and leaders to support them in implementing the program within their school or district.
- ***Coaching***. Type of feedback provided to teachers and/or administrators by a "coach" who is an expert in implementation, often a staff member or consultant, to the program developer.
- ***Professional learning community (PLC).*** The program provides guidelines or materials to support groups of teachers, staff, and/or administrators/district leaders to meet independently for the purposes of enhancing and sustaining high-quality implementation
- ***Train the trainer.*** The program provides training for a teacher or designated SEL district educator/mentor to teach program content and to train others.

B. Process for Updating Training and Implementation Support Criteria

Training and implementation support criteria updates were informed by a literature review and are consistent with CASEL's prioritization of high-quality training and implementation support and adult SEL. Implementation science confirms that training and ongoing support are important to ensure effective implementation (e.g., Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017; Devaney, O'Brien, Resnik, Keister, & Weissberg, 2016). In the past, CASEL collected information on each program's capacity to support implementation through brief surveys and structured phone interviews. Going forward, CASEL will perform a robust review of actual training and support materials (e.g. facilitator manuals, agendas, and PowerPoint decks) and provide an opportunity for programs to comment explicitly on their incorporation of evidence-based professional development strategies through a questionnaire.

We will continue to follow up our material review with an interview to more fully understand each program's training and implementation support offerings. Going forward, our review of actual training materials will also create the conditions for a rich conversation around the program's pedagogy.

C. Updates: Program Implementation Criteria.

Implementation Update 1

CASEL will review professional development and training materials to determine if they are incorporating evidence-based professional development principles and practices.

CASEL's view of evidence-based professional development is informed by the work of the Learning Policy Institute (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017). Following this approach, we will review professional development materials to determine whether programs include the following interrelated and nested approaches: (a) incorporate active learning, (b) provide time for modeling and hands-on practice, (c) offer opportunities for feedback and reflection, and (d) support adult SEL. As we continue to gather more information, we will determine where and how to communicate our findings most effectively to Program Guide users. A lack of evidence-based professional development may lead to exclusion from the Guide.

Implementation Update 1a. Incorporates active learning. CASEL will review whether trainings include active approaches to learning. This includes opportunities for educators to grapple with material, co-construct norms, participate in interactive strategies, and examine their own beliefs, biases, and practices.

Rationale. Similar to how CASEL references each of the evidence-based "SAFE" strategies represented for student-facing programming, research has shown that active forms of learning help adults master new skills as well. Active learning is critical to provide opportunities for educators to participate in the same style of learning they will be providing for their students. In addition, in contrast to a "sit and get" learning experience, active learning encourages educators to develop the sense of agency necessary to design and adapt strategies to meet the unique needs of their contexts. These opportunities allow teachers to "transform their teaching and not simply layer new strategies on top of the old, a hallmark of adult learning theory" (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017, p. 7).

Implementation Update 1b. Provides time for modeling and hands-on practice. As a facet of active learning, CASEL will review whether trainings include modeling and hands-on practice. This includes opportunities for educators to participate as students in sample lesson plans, review unit plans and sample student work, observe video or in-person lessons, and practice delivering strategies and lessons themselves.

Rationale. Professional learning that "utilizes models of effective practice have proven successful at promoting teacher learning and supporting student achievement" (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017, p. 11). Opportunities to observe expert implementation and review sample student work supports educators' understanding of what SEL instruction looks like, sounds like, and feels like in practice. Just as important, hands-on practice allows educators to "try on" new ways of thinking and being in a safe, supportive environment.

Implementation Update 1c. Offers opportunities for feedback and reflection as a means of continuous improvement. CASEL will review whether trainings provide time for feedback and reflection.

The review will document the inclusion of opportunities for educators to reflect on their instructional styles and aspirations for SEL. It will also include opportunities for educators to receive feedback from peers and trainers while making real-time adjustments. Professional learning that is sustained over time and includes coaching from a trainer may be especially beneficial. "Coaching or other expert scaffolding can support the effective implementation of new curricula, tools, and approaches by educators" (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017, p. 13).

Rationale. "While feedback and reflection are two distinct practices, they work together to help teachers move thoughtfully toward the expert visions of practice" (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017, p. 14). The opportunity to try new strategies, receive input, and make desired changes empowers educators to be active participants in their own continuous improvement process. Additionally, it prepares teachers to be responsive to the varied needs of their students.

Implementation Update 1d. Developing adult SE competencies. CASEL will review whether time and resources are dedicated to adult SEL. This includes opportunities for educators to build self-awareness by reflecting on their own identities. It also includes opportunities to explore other SE competencies, including those connected to working with implicit bias, creating work/life balance, and effective collaboration.

Rationale. There are several evidence-based reasons to intentionally build promote adult SEL competence including: building student SECs, reducing teacher stress and burnout and its impact on students, fostering teacher identity that supports culturally responsive education, supporting effective SEL program implementation, and developing educational equity. High-quality professional learning around SEL helps educators shift not only their practices but the underlying assumptions that inform them.

Implementation Update 2. Strategies that Support Educational Equity

Updates to the Program Guide will document strategies that support educational equity, including understanding context and working with bias (found in training and implementation support materials).

The rationale for documenting strategies that support educational equity is found in Section II, Design Update 2 above. As referenced, our interviews with SELect programs indicated that effective strategies for working with bias and understanding context are most commonly employed through training and implementation support. Therefore, the rationale for these strategies is included in the current section.

Implementation Update 2a. Working with bias. Updates to the Program Guide will document whether training and implementation support provides educators with strategies for understanding and working with bias.

Rationale. Successfully teaching culturally diverse students requires an awareness of systemic inequity that provides relative privilege to some, and disadvantage to others, based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, language, health, ability etc. (Hammond, 2015). Schools can perpetuate inequity because educators, like all people, have a cultural lens that guides their values, interpretations, and expectations of student behavior, which impacts educational practices (e.g., Gregory & Fergus, 2017). Becoming aware of implicit bias associated with one's cultural lens involves self-examination of one's own cultural identity and frame of reference and widening one's understanding, explanation, and evaluation of the actions of others.

In incorporating this aspect of adult SEL into programming, strategies should focus on teachers and school staff increasing their awareness of their own biases and assumptions, as well as their identities. To meet this definition, there must be purposeful opportunities for teachers and school staff to explore their own identities and implicit biases and build awareness of how systemic inequities impact students. These opportunities generally reside in initial training and/or ongoing implementation support. Additionally, there must be explicit guidance around how teachers and school staff can use this information to improve instruction and/or interactions with students so these interactions are more personally meaningful for students.

Design Update 2b. Understanding context. Updates to the Program Guide will document whether training and implementation support provides educators with strategies for understanding the contexts of their students' lived experiences.

Rationale. To build equitable practices, educators need to have awareness and understanding of culture and conditions related culture that lead to (in)equitable education. Having background knowledge and information about context and culture is a prerequisite to applying culturally responsive strategies. Hammond (2015) describes cultural understanding at three levels, from surface to deep features. *Surface culture* includes observable and concrete aspects such as clothing, food, and music. *Shallow culture* involves unspoken norms, rules, and attitudes such as nonverbal communication, eye contact, and appropriate touching. *Deep culture* includes tacit knowledge and unconscious assumptions that guide one's worldview, or mental model, including broad aspects such as ethics, spirituality, well-being, competition and cooperation, and learning.

Program materials can provide suggestions and strategies that facilitate teachers and other school staff learning about the cultural backgrounds, everyday experiences, and perspectives of the students and families with whom they work. To be considered as a strategy that supports educational equity, there must be explicit guidance around how teachers and school staff can use this information to improve instruction and/or interactions with students so these interactions are more personally meaningful for students.

Additionally, project-based and experiential learning opportunities (Condliffe et al., 2017) such as service learning can invoke agency and increase social and civic skills across diverse groups of students (Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011). Similarly, there has been considerable attention to positive impacts of youth participatory action research (YPAR) on social, emotional, and academic outcomes for children and youth. YPAR is a youth-led approach that features young people being supported in the use scientific research methods to design and evaluate their efforts to address local issues that affect them and their communities. Among diverse students, YPAR has a positive influence on school-based pursuits and academic outcomes as well as active school and community engagement for social change (e.g., Ozer, 2016; Ozer and Douglas, 2015).

D. Final Designation Determination

A program that passes both the evaluation and design stages of the review process qualifies for inclusion in the CASEL Guide. The accepted program's final designation (i.e., *SELect*, *Promising*, or *SEL-Supportive*) is determined by reviewing the separate designations the program received at the evaluation and design phases of the review process. If a program received the same designation at both phases, that will be the program's final designation. If a program received different designations at either review phase, the lower of the two designations will be the program's final designation. See the examples below for what this looks like:

- If a program received a ***SELect*** designation from evaluation review and a ***SELect*** designation from design review, the final designation would be ***SELect***.
- If a program received a ***SELect*** designation from evaluation review and a ***Promising*** designation from design review, the final designation would be ***Promising***.
- If a program received a ***Promising*** designation from evaluation review and a ***SELect*** designation from design review, the final designation would be ***Promising***.
- If a program received a ***Promising*** or ***SELect*** designation from evaluation review and a ***SEL-Supportive*** designation from design review, the final designation would be ***SEL-Supportive***.

Section V: Conclusion

CASEL places great value and resources in publishing our Program Guide to help educators seeking to find evidence-based programs that will promote social and emotional competence in their students. The CASEL Program Guide also serves as a resource to highlight new ways of examining evidence-based SEL programs that speak to the needs of all our nation's students, especially those students and their families who have been historically marginalize.

Since CASEL's last updates in 2015, the field has progressed in terms of research, practice, and policy, not only in the development of ESSA standards, but in a variety of facets of SEL programming. These advances have motivated our updates to the evaluation, design, and implementation criteria required for inclusion in the 2021 Program Guide.

CASEL's research approach has sought to offer the broad outlines of the SEL field and mainly engaged in synthetic research—aimed at establishing standards and an evidence base for high-quality SEL and establishing links between SEL and short-term academic, social, and emotional growth and development and longer-term life success. Thus, considerable effort has gone into organizing, critically assessing, and synthesizing the most current available literature and using the most up-to-date findings, along with evidence from the field to offer our best thinking in the continued growth in the field of social and emotional learning programming to include the ways that programs can inform the building of equitable learning spaces for students. CASEL believes the adoption of evidence-based programs is key to providing consistent, high-quality SEL opportunities for all students, and we value the opportunity to publish our consumer-style report to help decision-makers find the one that fits their communities' needs.

These proposed updates include shifts in the field that reflect the idea that SEL can support educational equity and excellence by fostering social and emotional competencies and meaningful engagement among all stakeholders to create inclusive learning environments that promote healthy identity, agency, and belonging for all persons within and across social categories in our diverse world. SEL empowers people to create thriving schools, contribute to safe and healthy communities, and ultimately transform our society. Students, families, schools, and communities are all part of the systems that shape learning, development, and experiences. Inequities based on race, ethnicity, class, and other factors are deeply ingrained in the vast majority of these systems and impact students' social, emotional, and academic learning.

While SEL alone will not solve longstanding and deep-seated inequities in the education system, it can create the conditions needed for schools to examine and interrupt inequitable policies and practices, create more inclusive learning environments, reveal and nurture the interests and assets of all individuals.

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