CASEL

2022 Social and Emotional Learning State Scorecard Scan

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Introduction

States have the power to create conditions that encourage and foster evidence-based, systemic social and emotional learning (SEL) to support equity and excellence in districts, schools, and classrooms. Two key features of supporting SEL at the state level include the development of free-standing K-12 SEL competencies and the elevation of guidance for SEL implementation (Dusenbury and Yoder, 2017). These two features are foundational elements in a comprehensive package of policies at the state level that support systemic SEL. Our latest CASEL scan finds that support for SEL at the state level has never been stronger – with 27 states offering free-standing K-12 SEL competencies and 44 states offering guidance for SEL implementation.

This brief presents key findings that capture the current landscape of state SEL policy and showcase the increasing emphasis on SEL.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of CASEL's State Scan is to track the development of competencies (also called standards, benchmarks, or learning goals) and guidance (also called resources and tools) that support SEL. Developing competencies and guidance are two foundational efforts at the state level in the pro-cess of supporting high-quality, systemic SEL in schools. These policy efforts align with CASEL's five core SEL competencies, which have guided the field for over two decades. Since 2011, CASEL has completed state scans approximately every two years to moni-tor the extent to which states have developed these foundational policy efforts for SEL. Although each CASEL State Scan individual-ly provides a snapshot of the SEL landscape at a given time, they collectively illustrate the advancement of SEL policies throughout the country. This current scan focuses on the prominence and momentum of SEL competencies and guidance across the United States today.

Suggested citation

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Key Findings

PreK Through 12th Grade
Free-Standing Competencies/Standards

At the time this scan was conducted, we found [27 states](#) now have free-standing K-12 SEL competencies (with some competencies extending up to adults and most also including developmental benchmarks for specific ages ranges of students). As shown in Figure 1, this number represents a 50% increase in the number of states with free-standing K-12 SEL competencies in the last two years (Dusenbury et al., 2011; Dusenbury et al, 2014; Dusenbury et al., 2018; Yoder et al, 2020).
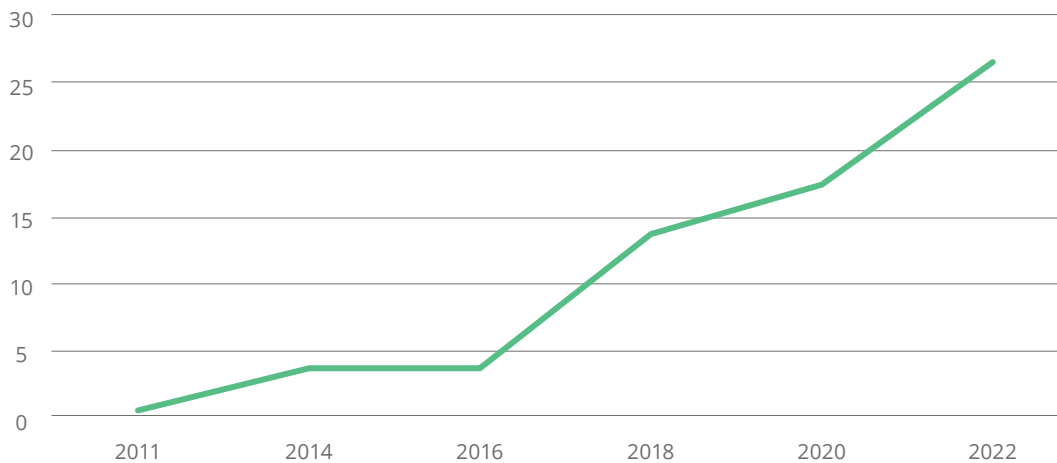
States with K-12 SEL Competencies

Figure 1: States with Free-Standing K-12 SEL Competencies

All 50 states have Early Childhood/PreK SEL Competencies. In addition, seven states have SEL competencies that extend into early elementary grades.

SEL Implementation Guidance and Tools

We found 44 states offer guidance to support implementation of SEL. In addition to promoting general, high-quality resources (e.g., evidence-based and validated tools like the CASEL Guide to SEL Programs) on how to support SEL implementation, all 44 of these states have developed state-specific guidance (i.e., resources developed explicitly for the context of a particular state). Because the development of state-specific guidance requires additional work on the part of a state, this specificity can be viewed as another indicator of states' support of SEL. As seen in Figure 2, the growth in state-specific guidance (in addition to sharing external resources) to support SEL implementation represents nearly a 70% increase in the last two years (Yoder et al., 2020).

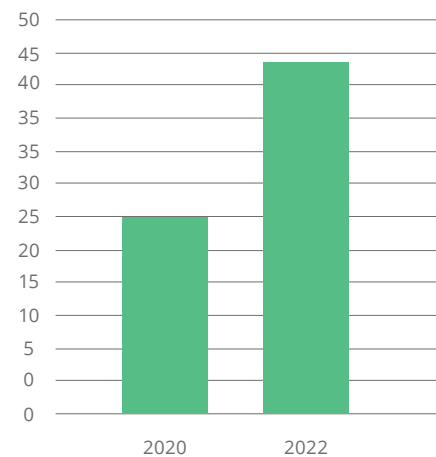Much of state guidance is found on websites focused on SEL. There are now 39 states with websites dedicated specifically to SEL, which represents a 30% increase in the number of states with SEL websites in the last two years (Yoder et al., 2020).

States with State-Specific Guidance for SEL

Figure 2: States with State Specific Guidance Supporting SEL Implementation

Key Takeaways

Since CASEL's first scan in 2011, the past decade has witnessed tremendous growth in the number of states adopting competencies and guidance to support the implementation of SEL. Our latest scan shows that the support for SEL on these metrics has never been more prominent. When compared with past scans, our scan also reveals that the last two years have resulted in continued substantial growth of SEL competencies and guidance, suggesting that momentum for SEL sup-port continues to build (Dusenbury et al, 2014; Dusenbury et al., 2018; Yoder et al, 2020).

What accounts for this rapid increase? Many factors have likely contributed. In the past two years, policymakers, educators, parents, and students alike have increasingly recognized the power of SEL to address the pandemic, the need for a more equitable school system, and the call to prepare students for the future, including the rapidly changing world of work. However, this policy growth is not merely a response or reaction to these difficult challenges. State policy, especially the development and adoption of competencies or guidance, takes time. Therefore, the prominence of state SEL competencies and guidance today represents the recognition of evidence-based SEL as a strengths-based method of supporting students and educators on a wide range of outcomes, including healthy relationships, academic performance, mental wellness, and more (Durlak et al., 2011). Although the challenges of the last two years may have served to make the need for SEL in schools all the more clear, social and emotional skills have always been essential for student success and well-being.

While the states themselves are the drivers of this work, much of the recent growth has also been supported by CASEL's Collaborating States Initiative (CSI). Formed in 2016, the CSI is a community of state teams (usually led by the state department of education). As these state teams create foundational SEL policies (e.g., developing competencies/standards and creating and/or linking to guidance), the CSI continues to partner with them to deepen and extend their policies and strategies that support high-quality, systemic SEL. An extensive array of the examples, tools, and resources for developing comprehensive state SEL policy, including the CSI State Theory of Action, can be found on the CSI State Resource Center. Going forward, we expect the CASEL State Scan to expand its scope to capture the variety of policy efforts at the state level that explicitly support SEL. As always, the CSI seeks to support the creation of state policy that supports high-quality, systemic SEL in all 50 states.

Methodology

We reviewed state department of education and related agency websites in January of 2022 to identify information in addition to conducting an internet search for state SEL efforts. Specifically, we searched for:

1. State-articulated, free-standing, and comprehensive competencies/standards for SEL
2. Guidance or tools to support implementation of SEL
3. Websites developed explicitly to share information related to SEL

We provided the opportunity for states to review our findings.

All data can be found and reviewed on CASEL's Interactive Map.

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Citations

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