Aligning Preschool through High School Social and Emotional Learning Standards:
A Critical and Doable Next Step

Katherine M. Zinsser[*], **Roger P. Weissberg**[*+] **& Linda Dusenbury**[+]
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

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Following a surge of research showing the importance of social and emotional competence for children's academic and social success (e.g., Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011; Sklad, Diekstra, Ritter, Ben & Gravesteijn, 2012), education policymakers across the country have made efforts to incorporate social and emotional learning (SEL) into state standards of learning. Today virtually all states have comprehensive, free-standing SEL standards at the preschool level, and at the K-12 level most states have made at least some efforts to integrate social and emotional competencies in other sets of academic standards, such as Health, Social Studies, or English Language Arts (Dusenbury et al., in press). However, only a few states have comprehensive, free-standing SEL standards at the K-12 level. Further, SEL standards vary substantially from state to state both in terms of quality and inclusiveness. Most striking of all is the lack of alignment between birth to preschool standards and K-12 standards in how SEL is defined and emphasized.

Our call for the alignment of SEL standards is in harmony with the growing attention to SEL by state and federal policymakers (e.g. NASBE, 2013) and a rising trend toward more global preschool through early elementary integration and alignment. For example, in 2012 the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors' Association joined together to host a forum titled *Aligning and Implementing Birth-3rd Grade Learning Standards: A Strong Foundation for College and Career-Training Readiness.* Similarly, the National Association of Elementary School Principals recently convened a task force focused on early learning to build and support an aligned system for preschool through 3rd grade. Concurrently foundations, nonprofits, and academic collaborations such as the Foundation for Child Development and the Preschool-3rd Grade National Work Group are advocating for the integration and alignment of early childhood and elementary education.

Notably, however, with regard to SEL standards alignment, we see no reason to limit this alignment to the first eight years of life. Instead, CASEL encourages the alignment of standards of learning across all grades and ages. This sentiment was recently echoed by teachers in a national survey. A majority of teachers believe that SEL should be an important part of children's in-school experience from preschool through high school (Bridgeland, Bruce & Hariharan, 2013).

A few key states, such as Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Kansas, have recently made significant strides both with regard to crafting high-quality SEL standards, but also in undertaking the challenging work of aligning SEL standards from early childhood through high school. Several states, including Idaho and Washington, have made great strides aligning SEL standards from preschool through early elementary school (3rd grade). At a time when states are continually revising learning standards to reflect changes in educational and developmental research and federal funding priorities, there are opportunities to capitalize on the advances made in these exemplar states. In particular, K-12 SEL standards can be enhanced by adopting some of the features commonly found in preschool standards.

In the following brief report we will review the importance of SEL for children's early and sustained success. We will also discuss key characteristics of high-quality SEL standards and the benefits of preschool through high school standards alignment. Finally, we will review examples of two sets of well-aligned standards and make recommendations for the development and implementation of well-aligned, high-quality state standards for SEL preschool through high school.

Social and Emotional Competence and the Process of Social-Emotional Learning

SEL is the process through which children and adults develop skills needed to effectively manage themselves and their relationships with others (CASEL, 2013; Weissberg & Cascarino,

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[*]University of Illinois at Chicago, [*+]University of Illinois at Chicago/CASEL, [+]CASEL

2013). Self-management, including the ability to focus attention, resist distractions, and regulate emotions, is a fundamental skill that undergirds all of academic learning. Indeed, research has repeatedly shown that children's learning is also tied to their emotional states. Further, learning is an inherently social process, as children and teachers work together to complete lessons (Denham, Brown & Domitrovich, 2010). Thus children's social and emotional competencies prepare them to meet the demands of the classroom, engage fully in learning, and benefit from instruction (Campbell & Stauffenberg, 2008; Denham, Brown & Domitrovich, 2010). Ultimately, developing such competencies prepares young people for successful careers and lives as productive citizens and leaders in our communities.

For nearly two decades the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been a leading voice in studying, defining, and promoting evidence-based SEL programming and policy.

Through this work CASEL has identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies that are critical for children's success in school, at work, and in life.

- **Self-awareness**. The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior.
- **Self-management**. The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations, and to set and work toward personal and academic goals.
- **Social awareness**. The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
- **Relationship skills**. The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups, including the skills to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.
- **Responsible decision-making**. The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

Children with greater social and emotional competencies have more success making friends, are more positive about school and have better grades and achievement later in elementary school (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Raver & Knitzer, 2002). The SEL strides made during early childhood set children up for greater success in the realms of social and cognitive development, pre-academic achievement, school readiness and adjustment (Denham et al., 2010). Aggressive behavior tends to increase during the elementary school years (Aber, Brown & Jones, 2003), so laying the groundwork of competencies in early childhood is particularly important.

It is important to note that SEL describes a *process* of acquiring a set of skills or competencies, not the skills themselves. This process is grounded in the relationships a child has with his social partners such as parents, peers, and teachers. Teachers increasingly are recognized as playing an important role in *teaching* social and emotional skills to children (Denham, Bassett & Zinsser 2012). Social emotional teaching (Zinsser, Denham & Curby, 2013) describes a variety of activities and practices – some purposeful and planned, some naturally occurring – that can promote SEL in students. These activities may include using an evidence-based SEL program or curriculum; using best practices in SEL instruction that promote social and emotional development through ongoing teacher-student interactions and socialization; creating a positive classroom emotional climate; and otherwise serving as a socially and emotionally competent adult role model for students. Several aspects of social-emotional teaching have long been traditions in early childhood education programs, and with the proliferation of effective SEL programs (See the *CASEL Guide* for examples, 2013) teachers at all grade levels are now taking a more conscious and active role in promoting children's social and emotional development. The convergence of research demonstrating the importance of SEL for children's school and life success and the role that teachers and schools can play in SEL is likely to provide a context that encourages administrators and education policymakers to include SEL in their state's learning standards.

State SEL Standards: What They Are and Why They Matter

Learning standards are statements about what students should know and be able to do as a result of educational instruction. When standards are well-written and well-implemented, they create consistency in education and communicate priorities to staff, students, and families. Furthermore, there is evidence that high-quality standards are positively associated with greater academic achievement (Finn, Julian & Petrilli, 2006). When standards also articulate clear goals and provide developmental benchmarks, they may serve as a powerful plan for education, especially if that plan also includes implementation of evidence-based curricula, high-quality professional development for teachers, and assessment that enables teachers to monitor students' progress toward goals.

States began authoring standards of learning as part of the educational reform movement in the 1980s and 1990s. These standards typically were developed for elementary and secondary students and focused on core academic subjects. More recently, states have engaged in the revision of state standards to adhere to the Common Core State Standards Initiative. At the same time many state offices of early childhood education have developed separate standards for children's early learning (birth through preschool). Oftentimes these early learning standards are developed through consultation of the Head Start Framework and reflect a whole-child approach to teaching and learning rather than focusing simply on academic content (Dusenbury et al., 2011; Dusenbury et al., in press), including domains such as Physical Development and Health and Approaches to Learning (full framework available at http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov).

With regard to SEL, the separate development of standards for preschool and K-12 students has resulted in independent sets of standards at the two levels. As one would expect, a comparison of each state's preschool standards with its K-12 standards often reflects this lack of coordination both in terms of terminology used to describe social-emotional competencies and the emphasis placed on SEL within the state. Indeed, although 49 states currently have free-standing standards for social and emotional development at the preschool level, only a handful of states currently have free-standing SEL standards at the K-12 level, and only three of these have free-standing SEL standards that are aligned across the whole education spectrum, preschool through high school (Dusenbury et al., in press).

In addition to attending to the full range of ages targeted by SEL standards, it is also important to consider the quality of these standards. Dusenbury et al. (in press) recently reviewed the literature on learning standards and identified key components of high-quality learning standards. Specifically, Dusenbury and colleagues recommend that SEL learning standards should:

- Provide clear, comprehensive standards statements for instruction of children from preschool through high school for the full range of SEL domains grounded in research.
- Include appropriate developmental benchmarks for children from preschool through 12th grade.
- Include guidance on how adults can support students through effective teaching practices.
- Include guidance on how to create a positive learning environment and school climate that supports SEL.
- Include guidelines on how to make instruction culturally and linguistically sensitive and relevant to students.
- Provide tools to support high-quality implementation, including recommendations about evidence-based programs, assessment, and opportunities for professional development.

Although each of these recommendations is important in the development of high-quality standards for SEL, this report will focus on the first item on Dusenbury's list: the development of state SEL standards that are comprehensive and aligned across all grade levels, preschool through high school.

The Importance of SEL Standards Alignment

SEL standards are important because they influence all aspects of the process of education to support SEL from curriculum development and selection to professional development, assessments, and evaluation. In essence, they define the goals for social and emotional education within a state. When learning standards include social and emotional domains of development, state officials are communicating to administrators, teachers, parents, and students that these competencies are important and valued – that they are priorities in the state's education system. Furthermore, SEL standards help to define what it means to be ready for school and adulthood and outline social and behavioral expectations in line with school climate goals. This message is strengthened and enhanced when it is consistently applied at every grade level using a common framework that is grounded in research.

When standards are developed separately and independently for different ages, whether they are birth-preschool, preschool through 3rd grade, or K-12, different aspects of growth and development may be emphasized and terminology may not be consistent. For example, a state's K-12 standards may refer to a competency as "Self-awareness" while its early childhood standards use the term "Self-concept." In some instances age categories for standards overlap, further contributing to the confusion. For example, a state may have birth- 3rd grade standards and K-12 standards that were adopted independently. Even though each standard may include social and emotional expectations for learning, it is often unclear how educators are expected to integrate and be accountable to both sets of standards in their classrooms.

Through the establishment of fully aligned SEL standards extending from preschool through high school, states can create a common language and establish progressive, developmentally appropriate expectations for children's social and emotional learning that will assist educators and parents in preparing children for success in the social world. Furthermore, the alignment of standards and use of consistent SEL language can facilitate common professional development opportunities for teachers across grades and can simplify the challenging tasks of selecting curriculum and assessment strategies for children and teachers.

Integrated SEL and Academic Standards

Another way that states differ in their adoption of SEL standards is the degree to which they integrate SEL into their other sets of learning standards. In their recent review of state SEL standards across the country, Dusenbury et al. (in press) explore several of the different ways states approach integration, a few of which will be summarized here. Although nearly all states articulate SEL standards separately (i.e., free-standing) from academic standards at the preschool level, a majority of state standards for the upper grades integrate SEL to some degree across other sets of standards. Presently 45 states are in the process of adopting the Common Core Standards in Math and English Language Arts, which contain some standards related to SEL, including communication (especially speaking and listening), cooperation skills, and problem-solving (Dusenbury, Zadrazil, Mart & Weissberg, 2011). Model standards for specific subjects similarly include some components of SEL in their suggested learning expectations. For example, the recently released College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State

Standards (available at http://www.socialstudies.org/C3) aims to help students hone their planning and communication skills. National Model Standards in Science (National Research Council, 1996), used by 42 states, address problem-solving. Other states include some dimensions of SEL under other domains such as health education standards. In the National Model Health Education Standards (CDC), aspects of SEL are referenced, including goal-setting and interpersonal communication skills.

Integration of SEL into other sets of standards is important but may not be sufficient to support high-quality instruction in SEL. Specifically, incorporation into academic subject standards, such as in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), often is not comprehensive and may result in unequal emphasis on SEL as a key domain of development. As a consequence, there is the risk that social and emotional competencies might be diminished or lost relative to academics. Similarly, not all aspects of SEL receive adequate attention in the CCSS. As Dusenbury et al., (2013) highlight, for example, the core competencies of Self-Awareness and Responsible Decision-Making are not covered by the CCSS, and the remaining domains are scattered across a range of anchor standards.

Another potentially unsatisfactory approach to integration is to include SEL standards within a different set of standards, such as health education. When states use this approach without also creating free-standing standards for SEL, they may overly constrain curriculum time and restrict the extent to which SEL can be broadly defined. For example, although Wisconsin includes "interpersonal communication skills" within their standards for health education, these skills are emphasized primarily to "enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks" (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2011; p. 21), and the greater purpose of such communication skills is underplayed. A further concern is that children typically do not receive regular health classes every year from preschool through high school. Time allotted to health may therefore not be sufficient to provide high-quality instruction on SEL.

When SEL is not clearly articulated in free-standing standards, the structural supports necessary to facilitate high-quality social-emotional teaching may also be impacted, and professional development, training, and curricular investments may be diminished in comparison to that available in other sets of free-standing standards. At the same time, SEL standards that are wholly separate and poorly integrated with academic standards also run the risk of being viewed as less important for students' learning and development. Thus, CASEL holds the position that SEL standards should be defined separately and on the same level as academic standards, but that states should also clearly identify how and where SEL goals can be met through academic subject instruction. Finding the correct balance between such free-standing and integrated approaches to standardized SEL will be challenging, but several states have made notable progress. Two states in particular, Illinois and Pennsylvania, have made great strides in SEL standards development and can serve as models for those still wrestling with the inclusion of SEL into their standards of learning.

Examples of Aligned SEL Standards

The realm of learning standards is a rapidly evolving domain of public policy, with states continually revising their standards and new states incorporating SEL into their standards each year. Therefore, where high-quality, well-crafted and fully aligned standards have already been drafted and implemented, a few trailblazing states can serve as models for others. We will next introduce two such states, Illinois and Pennsylvania, and describe their existing SEL standards spanning preschool to high school. A third state, Kansas, currently has SEL standards that are aligned from K-12. While this alignment is a significant development, Kansas is not presented as an example in this report because its SEL standards do not include preschool. For a full discussion of the status of SEL standards across the country, see Dusenbury et al. (in press).

The Illinois Standards for Social and Emotional Learning

In 2004 Illinois was the first state in the nation to adopt and implement free-standing K-12 SEL standards, and with the recent revisions of the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS available at http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/early_learning_standards.pdf), the state is a rare example of fully aligned SEL standards. Illinois uses the CASEL framework of SEL as a conceptual model for learning standards at each grade level. Illinois uses the same overall goals for SEL across each grade-level cluster: preschool, early elementary (grades K-3), late elementary (grades 4-5), middle/junior high (grades 6-8), early high school (grades 9-10), and late high school (grades 11-12). The full standards are available at http://www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm). Children in Illinois are expected to be working toward three SEL goals:

Goal 30: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.

Goal 31: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

Goal 32: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

These three goals, while included in the 2004 K-12 standards, are also in the newly released IELDSs. Table 1 shows an example standard from each of the three goals along with example benchmarks for each age band (Preschool through High School). The 10 Illinois SEL standards cover each aspect of SEL as defined above. Three standards focus on the development of self-awareness and self-management, four on social-awareness and relationship skills, and another three on responsible decision-making skills. Furthermore the standards are fully aligned and highly consistent across all ages and grades, with only slight language modifications at the early learning level for developmental appropriateness.

For each grade-level cluster, the Illinois standards also include benchmarks, referred to as performance descriptors. At the early learning level, these benchmarks are intended to "provide teachers and caregivers with objective means of evaluating a child's progress" (Illinois State Board of Education, 2013; p. 7) but, as can be seen in Table 1, descriptions at all age bands can be informative to teachers and caregivers. The benchmarks increase in developmental sophistication from one grade-level cluster to the next. They also include suggestions for how topics can be taught in integrated ways across other academic subject

Table 1: example standards and benchmarks across all age bands of the Illinois SEL standards

	Preschool	Early Elementary	Late Elementary	Middle/Jr. High	Early H.S.	Late H.S
Standard 30.A: Identify and manage one's emotions and behavior.						
Goal 30: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success	Recognize and label basic emotions	Recognize and accurately label emotions and how they are linked to behavior.	Describe a range of emotions and the situations that cause them.	Analyze factors that create stress or motivate successful performance.	Analyze how thoughts and emotions affect decision making and responsible behavior.	Evaluate how expressing one's emotions in different situations affects others.
Standard 31.B: Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.						
Goal 31: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships	Interact verbally and nonverbally with other children.	Identify ways to work and play well with others.	Describe approaches for making and keeping friends.	Analyze ways to establish positive relationships with others.	Evaluate the effects of requesting support from and providing support to others.	Evaluate the application of communication and social skills in daily interactions with peers, teachers, and families.
Standard 32.A: Consider ethical, safety and societal factors in making decisions.						
Goal 32: Demonstrate decision making-skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.	Participate in discussions about why rules exist.	Explain why unprovoked acts that hurt others are wrong.	Demonstrate the ability to respect the rights of self and others.	Evaluate how honesty, respect, fairness, and compassion enable one to take the needs of others into account when making decisions.	Demonstrate personal responsibility in making ethical decisions.	Apply ethical reasoning to evaluate societal practices.

standards. For example, Goal 32, Learning Standard C, "Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community" can be integrated with Social Studies Standard Goal 14.A of the early learning standards, "Understand what it means to be a member of a group and community."

With the recent revision, the early learning standards now more tightly adhere to the three-goal framework, making Illinois one of only a few states to fully align their SEL standards from preschool to 12th grade. Alignment was complex and necessitated collaboration both within and without the State Board of Education. However, Illinois has the advantage of having successfully implemented the K-12 standards already and thus can serve as a strong model for other states engaged in standards work.

Pennsylvania Standards for Student Interpersonal Skills

The Pennsylvania Standards for Student Interpersonal Skills (SIS) are organized around four grade bands (Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, grades 1-5, 6-8, and 9-12). As with the Illinois standards, Pennsylvania also based its standards on the CASEL framework. The SIS address three sets of skills intended to delineate how students should be prepared to "navigate the social world of family, school, college, and career not only in America but in the world of the 21st century and the global marketplace" (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2012; p. 3). Each standard area is further delineated into three to five strands reflecting the social and emotional competencies framework described above:

Standard Area 16.1: Self-Awareness and Self-Management

Dimensions: Managing emotions and behavior, influence of personal traits on life achievements, resiliency, goal setting.

Standard Area 16.2: Establishing and Maintaining Relationships

Dimensions: Relationships, diversity, communication, managing interpersonal conflicts, support, asking for help.

Standard Area 16.3: Decision-Making and Responsible Behavior

Dimensions: Decision-making skills, understanding social norms, responsible active engagement.

Within each dimension Pennsylvania then articulates a series of developmentally appropriate expectations and gives examples of such benchmarks within a dimension across the age bands and each standard area.

As in Illinois and many other states, Pennsylvania originally developed their birth – preschool standards separately from their K-12 standards. However, attuned to the challenges of implementing two disparate sets of learning standards, the State Office of Child Development and Early Learning commissioned an alignment study, which resulted in a standards revision process. Starting in 2009, Pennsylvania developed the Standards Alignment System (SAS; http://www.pdesas.org), which hosts a database of standards that are now seamlessly aligned from preschool through 12th grade.

The examples in Table 2 are drawn from the SIS standards on the SAS. Notably, the age bands in the SAS are much broader than those in Illinois, and within the standards there are no benchmarks elucidating what relevant behaviors may be exhibited at each band. However, the Office of Child Development and Early Learning is still in the process of revising their early childhood curriculum framework, which will provide behavioral benchmarks and suggest supportive practices in alignment with the new SIS for preschool through 2nd grade. A further strength of the Pennsylvania standards is that the SAS portal provides links to relevant materials for teachers and resources including lesson plans, instructional content, web and video content, and assessment tools for each of the SIS learning standards. These

Table 2: Example Standards and Benchmarks across all age bands of the Pennsylvania standards for students interpersonal skills

	Preschool - Kindergarten	Grades 1-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
		Managing Emotions and Behavior		
Standard 16.1: Self-Awareness and Self-Management	16.1.K.A: Distinguish between emotions and identify socially accepted ways to express them.	16.1.5.A: Examine the impact of emotions and responses on view of self and interactions with others.	16.1.8.A: Assess factors that influence emotional self-management and impact relationships at home, school, and community.	16.1.12.A: Evaluate emotional responses in relation to the impact on self and others at home, school, work, and community.
		Relationships		
Standard 16.2: Establishing and Maintaining Relationships	16.2.K.A: Interact with peers and adults in a socially acceptable manner.	16.2.5.A: Establish relationships that are positive and supportive of others.	16.2.8.A: Analyze internal and external factors that influence relationships.	16.2.12.A: Establish and maintain quality relationships that enhance personal, college, and career goals.
		Decision Making Skills		
Standard 16.3: Decision Making and Responsible Behavior	16.3.K.A: Interpret the consequences of choices.	16.3.5.A: Recognize that there are consequences for every decision which are the responsibility of the decision maker.	16.3.8.A: Examine the impact of decisions on personal safety, relationships, and group interactions.	16.3.12.A: Evaluate conflicts considering personal, ethical, legal, safety, and civic impact of the consequences and acceptance of final choice.

resources may be invaluable to classroom teachers aiming to intentionally enhance their social-emotional teaching practices.

Lessons Learned from Examples of Aligned SEL Standards

Pennsylvania and Illinois represent trailblazing states that have invested a great deal of energy, time, and infrastructure into the promotion of students' SEL. It is laudable that in both states SEL standards are included with all other subject areas in the listing of standards on state education websites. This communicates clearly that children's SEL is highly valued along with traditional academic subjects such as language arts and mathematics. Both states also address each of the core competencies of SEL in their standards and use consistent labels and terminology throughout the age bands while still maintaining developmental appropriateness of skills. These are important characteristics of high-quality standards according to Dusenbury et al. (in press).

There are also a few notable distinctions between the states. Pennsylvania has invested heavily in the online SAS portal and is striving to align teaching and learning expectations by establishing a consistency of language, presentation, and emphasis across ages. The portal also provides guidance for adults on how to support students and how to create safe and supportive school environments. Similarly, in their SEL standards website, Illinois provides guidelines for school/district leadership teams on the creation of positive conditions for learning, a key aspect of strong standards according to Dusenbury et al. (in press). Illinois also provides rich detail for teachers in the form of detailed performance descriptors (benchmarks) within the standards themselves (e.g., 115 descriptors for Goal 1, grades 1-5, e.g., "Demonstrate a range of emotions through facial expressions and body language"). Although the Pennsylvania SAS portal does not provide such benchmarks for children's behavior and learning, indicators will be available in the forthcoming revised early childhood curriculum framework.

To summarize, Pennsylvania and Illinois have each made great strides in the development of preschool to high school SEL standards. As these states continue to refine, implement, and adopt these standards, it will be important for future research to assess additional features of high-quality standards, such as linguistic sensitivity and professional development. Experiences in different states going forward will provide insight into how the differences in standards definitions and implementation approaches (e.g., narrow age bands, online integration supports, detailed indicators and benchmarks) impact their effectiveness.

Recommendations for Aligning SEL Standards

The current efforts across the country to develop and revise as well as support implementation of learning standards creates a unique opportunity for the purposeful alignment of preschool and K-12 standards and the expansion of preschool SEL traditions. Through the careful crafting of state standards for SEL that are fully aligned across all grades, policymakers can ensure students matriculate from their school systems socially, emotionally, and cognitively ready for their adult lives.

The examples above describe some trailblazing approaches to SEL standards alignment. The efforts in Illinois and Pennsylvania represent significant advances in state SEL standards, and the resultant standards can serve as strong models for other states engaged in standards revision. However, based on the analysis of strong standards by Dusenbury et al. (in press), room remains for improvement. Following are a few suggestions for ways states can strengthen their standards to have the greatest impact on classroom practices and children's SEL.

SEL standards should adequately encompass the full range of necessary social and emotional competencies. It should also be evident which social emotional competency or competencies each standard is addressing. Both Illinois and Pennsylvania utilized the CASEL framework for SEL competencies and thus were able to address each competency fully. Without a solid framework for what SEL is, state standards will not address all of the necessary dimensions of SEL.

Standards are most useful when they are written clearly and can easily inform practice. The Illinois standards provide descriptions of developmentally appropriate skills related to each standard. However, neither the Illinois nor the Pennsylvania standards currently go as far as to provide suggestions for teachers and caregivers as to how to help children develop the skills at each grade (e.g., how to create a positive environment that

encourages emotional expression). As Dusenbury and colleagues (in press) explain, preschool standards have historically often included benchmarks on what children should learn as well as guidelines on how teachers can support that learning. Such guidance in the newly aligned standards may help to demystify SEL for administrators, teachers, and parents and could be especially helpful in the upper grades.

Standards for each age/grade should clearly build off previously acquired skills/goals and align with the next phase/stage of standards. Therefore such standards should be written with relatively narrow age/grade bands and should balance adherence to both developmental milestones and administrative cut-offs. For example, the Illinois standards divide age bands into early and late elementary, respecting the developmental differences between 1st and 5th graders. At the child level, a strong SEL standard enables teachers, parents, and staff to share a language and discuss a child's progress on each element in comparison to the standards and with respect to a child's developmental abilities. At the school level, such standards can support continuity of care from one grade to the next, with teachers, staff, and administrators sharing an expectation for each child and each classroom with regard to SEL. When age/grade bands are made too broad, teachers are not adequately guided as to the realistic developmental expectations for their students.

Standards are also strengthened when they include strategies to support high-quality implementation, including adoption of evidence-based programs, use of SEL assessment that allows teachers to monitor student progress, and high-quality professional development. Illinois' successful implementation of the K-12 standards has been supported by several of these features, especially in districts participating in CASEL's Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI) project (see http://www.casel.org/collaborating-districts). Pennsylvania's SAS also serves as a portal to some of these resources. States seeking to implement aligned SEL standards may benefit from considering how they will support the following components of standards adoption.

Selecting SEL curricula. As states adopt new or revised SEL standards, administrators may find themselves searching for new curricula that align with the new standards for social and emotional development. The *2013 CASEL Guide*, the first review of its kind in nearly a decade (http://casel.org/guide/), identifies 23 preschool and elementary school programs that successfully promote students' self-control, relationship building, and problem-solving, among other social and emotional skills. The secondary CASEL guide will be released in 2014. Given that the most beneficial school-based SEL programs are ones that provide sequential and developmentally appropriate instruction in SEL skills, educators may find guides such as these helpful in identifying and selecting evidence-based programs.

Assessing SEL. In terms of assessment, it is helpful for states to recommend reliable and valid methods of SEL assessments that teachers and principals can use to monitor student progress toward achieving standards. There are resources that may be helpful. For example, Denham, Ji, and Hamre (2010) created a compendium of assessment tools available to measure SEL (https://casel.squarespace.com/library/2013/12/4/assessment-compendium).

Professional development. As teachers adapt their classroom practices to address the SEL standards, they will benefit from development opportunities that equip them with the tools and resources necessary to support children's SEL. This professional development should focus both on the chosen SEL curriculum implemented in their school and also on the other components of being an effective SEL teacher, such as creating positive classroom environments and honing their own social and emotional competencies.

Recommendations for Supporting SEL Standards Development

Although a majority of the important work with regard to SEL standards development will occur at the state level, there are important roles for federal and nongovernmental organizations to play as well. National organizations can serve an important role in creating resources for states to ease the process of developing and aligning standards. In particular, the National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Association of State Boards of Education, and the Common Core State Standards Initiative are all key players in helping move standards development forward. Similarly, organizations such as CASEL are well-positioned to bring together experts in the field to devise model standards for SEL. Such a model could expedite the process for many states and serve as a springboard for in-depth discussions of SEL at state and local levels. The model for standards can also serve to support the adoption of other important SEL components, such as programming, assessment, and professional development. Finally, researchers can support the adoption of SEL standards by continuing to develop and refine valid, reliable, practitioner-friendly and developmentally appropriate measures of social-emotional competencies spanning early childhood through adolescence.

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