States Charging the Way to Support
Systemic Social and Emotional Learning:

STATE-LEVEL INSIGHTS FROM THE CASEL-WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIP

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ABOUT CASEL'S LEARNING SERIES ON RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS (RPPS)

CASEL has produced a series of briefs documenting insights from our efforts to understand how educators and researchers can build relationships that support a shared action research agenda around social and emotional learning (SEL).

This five-part series shares the perspectives of researchers and practitioners on developing and sustaining collaborative inquiry in classrooms, schools, districts, and states. The goal of the series is two-fold: (1) to articulate an overview of CASEL's research-practice agenda, (2) to explore our learnings at the school, district, and state level about developing research-practice partnerships (RPPs), action research, continuous improvement, and adult SEL capacity.

This inquiry seeks to demonstrate the emerging coherence of CASEL's theories of action across the tiers of our education system and provide insights into where additional action and support are needed to foster equitable learning and development for children and youth from diverse backgrounds. The cases in this series have been shared with all CASEL stakeholders, including state, district, and school leadership and SEL team members; educators; youth and families; community and research partners; and funders.

Introduction

CASEL's RPP Series

Systemic SEL is an approach to create equitable learning conditions that actively involve all Pre-K to Grade 12 students in learning and practicing social, emotional, and academic competencies. These conditions are established through aligned policies, resources, and actions that support local schools and communities in implementing and continuously improving evidence-based programs and practices. Engaging in this work also provides the necessary space for creating an inclusive culture that fosters caring relationships that values youth voice, agency, and character while supporting coordinated school-family-community partnerships.

To promote systemic SEL at the state, district, and school levels, CASEL has developed three theories of action, guided by four focus areas that are scaled to their position within the system. Each theory of action provides a roadmap to systemic SEL implementation. Although CASEL has worked to delve into the impact and applicability of these theories of action, CASEL has yet to provide empirical evidence of how they may connect with one another.

This RPP series inquiry seeks to demonstrate the emerging coherence of CASEL's theories of action across the tiers of our education system and provide insights into where additional action and support are needed to foster equitable learning and development for children from diverse backgrounds. Specifically, we want to understand how actions within CASEL's State Theory of Action influence district and school actions. The State Theory of Action describes necessary work to influence systemic SEL practices within districts, which in turn impacts strategies that are put in place at the school level— each creating the conditions to promote positive outcomes for students.

	FOCUS AREA 2 RUBRIC Strengthen Adult SEL Compentencies and Capacity
2.E. Promote Systemic SEL in District, Schools, and Communities	SEAs provide policies, guidance, and resources specific to the ways in which districts and schools can flexibly implement systemic SEL in partnership with families and community organizations (for examples, see indicators of Schoolwide SEL and Indicators of Districtwide SEL).

Specifically, when states engage in the activities within the State Theory of Action, we assume states are creating the conditions for districts and schools to implement systemic SEL. To begin exploring those assumptions in this RPP, CASEL and Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction (DPI) co-constructed research questions to examine ways in which its resources, guidance, and professional learning promote systemic SEL, specifically Focus Area 2, Activity E, Promote Systemic SEL in Districts, Schools, and Communities.

The insights presented here were co-constructed by CASEL with DPI staff. This RPP presents evidence supporting how a state education agency (SEA) can approach and lead SEL professional learning and the influence these sessions have on the perceptions and actions of district- and school-level educators that attended the professional learning. Key insights highlighted in the brief include:

Insight 1: The scope and sequence of a state education agency's SEL trainings need to be purposeful and followed, beginning with a foundational understanding of systemic SEL and then focusing on how districts and schools can build capacity to engage in the work systemically.

Insight 2: When school leaders attend trainings with their teams, they foster a greater shared awareness and commitment to systemic SEL implementation.

Insight 3: District and school leaders should first examine and leverage their existing initiatives when planning and integrating systemic SEL implementation efforts.

Insight 4: Quality guidance, resources, and technical assistance from an SEA positively influences educators' definition of and approach to systemic SEL implementation.

Overview of the RPP With the Wisconsin DPI Office

Wisconsin DPI has a standing and steadfast commitment to supporting adult and student social and emotional development. DPI, one of 38 states in CASEL's Collaborating States Initiative, began its work in 2017 and made swift and decisive decisions on the policies and practices they would promote to ensure high-quality systemic SEL across the state. DPI staff was one of the first in the country to develop Pre-K to adult SEL competencies (most states only go through Grade 12), connecting their already developed Pre-K competencies. They further developed a comprehensive website providing tools, resources, and supports on adult SEL, coaching, professional learning, and connections to PBIS, among other efforts.

Once DPI developed foundational guidance and tools, they set out to create more intentional learning experiences for their educators to better understand what SEL is and how to implement it systemically. As such, DPI launched one of the first state-level conferences focused on SEL. DPI also developed state trainings on schoolwide, systemic SEL and provided webinars to encourage districts and schools to implement evidence-based programs and practices. In addition, DPI staff offered consultations on SEL implementation. Specifically, within the 2018-2019 academic year, the DPI team offered two types of trainings, based on the depth of prior SEL knowledge:

1. A two-day training on schoolwide, systemic SEL, "Moving Forward with SEL." In Day 1, DPI staff provided an overview of all four focus areas of CASEL's School Theory of Action, diving into the planning and adult SEL competency focus areas. In Day 2, DPI staff focused on supporting student social and emotional competencies and using data for continuous improvement.

2. The "Moving Forward With SEL: Train the Trainer" session equipped educators, who led SEL efforts across the state, to provide training to district and school staff on systemic SEL.

Given the vast amount of work DPI engaged in, they wanted to better understand the influence of their professional learning and guidance on districts and schools, making DPI a prime candidate to engage with CASEL in an RPP.

Co-constructed Research Aims

In initial meetings with CASEL, DPI described their current technical assistance models. They explored their problems of practice related to the professional learning of systemic SEL in their regions and districts. Through these conversations, CASEL and DPI generated mutually agreed-upon research questions focused on state-level technical assistance and training. Specifically, CASEL and DPI wanted to explore what aspects of the training were "sticky" and what components of the training led to district and school understanding and rollout of systemic SEL implementation. These aims were reflected in the two central research questions of the RPP:

- What are some necessary professional learning training factors that relate to systemic SEL implementation?

- What are some necessary district- and school-level environmental factors that relate to systemic SEL implementation?

These questions also speak to the state's continuous improvement efforts driving towards high-quality implementation of systemic SEL across Wisconsin. In refining its own strategies, resources, and tools, CASEL has put greater emphasis on the continuous improvement approach (Figure 2 below), which has prompted revisions to our state, district, and school theories of action, surveys, and observational tools.

This new approach incorporates continuous improvements in three phases. During the first phase, Organize, continuous improvement involves strategic planning. This means answering the questions "Where do we want to go?", "Where are we now?", and "Where have we been?" This phase includes key activities in Focus Area 1 to build a strong foundation helping ensure efforts are sustained long term and outcomes are met.

Next is the Implement phase, in which stakeholders begin to ask implementation-focused questions, such as "How do we get from where we are now to where we want to be?" An informed approach to SEL implementation includes interim data tracking using rapid learning cycles throughout the year. These cycles allow for stakeholders to course correct based on formative data throughout the academic year. This aspect of continuous improvement aligns to how stakeholders are both strengthening adult SEL (Focus Area 2) and promoting SEL for students (Focus Area 3).

Lastly, there is the Improve phase, during which stakeholders take a look at the bigger picture and ask, "Are we moving in the right direction given the changes made to implementation?" and "What are we learning on our journey?" This presents a structured process for practicing continuous improvement (Focus Area 4), which is driven by high-quality implementation, is aligned to strategic goals, and supports informed decisions toward equitable learning and development for all youth. This phase includes collecting, reflecting on, and sharing actionable data regularly to identify needs and create a plan with goals.

For this RPP collaboration, CASEL and DPI engaged in the Improve phase of the continuous improvement cycle below. Prior to our engagement, DPI already designed their professional learning and technical assistance (Organize) and had been implementing their technical assistance to schools and districts (Implement). As CASEL and DPI entered their partnership, DPI wanted to understand the strengths and areas of growth to optimize the professional learning experience to encourage systemic implementation, including the ways that guidance influences teacher practice.

Next, we describe the methods we used to begin to answer the research questions.

Continuous Improvement for Systemic SEL implementation

FIGURE 2.
CASEL Theory of Action in a continuous improvement cycle of Organize (Focus Area 1), Implement (Focus Areas 2 & 3), and Improve (Focus Area 4), states, districts, and schools can guide their approach to systemic SEL.

Where do we want to go? Where are we now, and where have we been?
• Strategic Planning

How do we get from where we are now to where we want to be?
• Implementation
• Interim Data Tracking
• Progress Monitoring

Are we moving in the right direction? What are we learning on our journey?
• Reflection on implementation and outcomes
• Data analysis and planning

Implement
Rapid learning cycles throughout implementation
Gather data
Reflect regularly
Make real-time pivots

Methods

Participating educators in the DPI lead trainings acted as respondents for the data points that were collected for this RPP. The data collection efforts consisted of:

1. **PD Feedback surveys,** which provided educators an opportunity to rate their experiences of the two types of professional learning training opportunities that DPI offered. For the Moving Forward with SEL Training, educators were encouraged to attend both Day 1 and Day 2 training; however, that did not always occur. Educators (n=25) completed feedback for Day 1 training retroactively; and educators (n=29) completed Day 2 feedback survey at the end of the Day 2 training session. Only a small number of educators (n=19) completed both Day 1 and Day 2. For the Train the Trainer session, 35 participating educators completed the feedback survey after the session.

   Educators that were surveyed responded to questions about (1) SEL efforts prior to the training, (2) perceptions and efficacy beliefs around SEL implementation, and (3) future priorities in their implementation efforts. CASEL analyzed and, with DPI, interpreted survey data to examine the percentages of agreement for items and potential significant relationships between survey items.

2. Semi-structured interviews (n=6), which provided an opportunity to better understand both research questions, allowed educators to describe in greater detail the ways in which the trainings directly impacted their implementation efforts and what environmental factors are necessary to provide systemic SEL. Some interviewees indicated their interest in participating in an interview at the end of the feedback survey. Then using selective sampling methods, CASEL emailed additional educators directly to see if they were interested in participating in an interview.

As a result, CASEL conducted post-training interviews with one district-level administrator, two school-level administrative leaders (i.e., a principal and an assistant principal), one teacher, one school-level SEL coach, and one school-level counselor. The educators who participated in the interview were majority female (83%). In the interview, educators responded to questions about how they define and approach systemic SEL, how the training influenced their overall SEL implementation, details of their usage of the CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL, and what support they need at the district and school level to enhance the quality of their systemic SEL implementation. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes related to systemic SEL implementation.
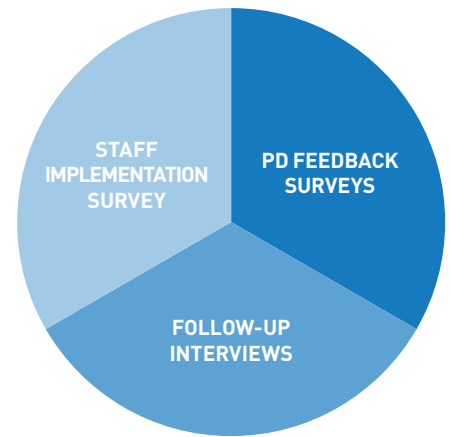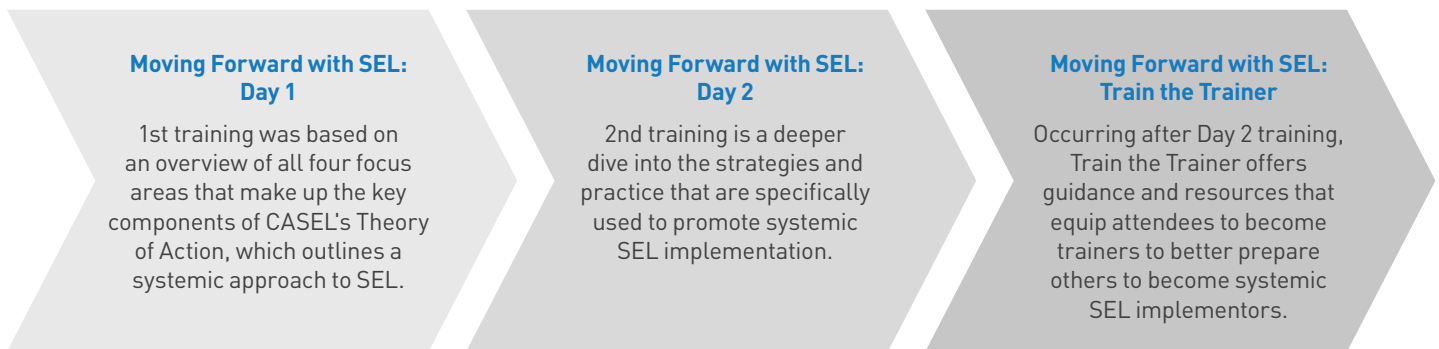
3. CASEL's Staff Implementation Survey, which allowed CASEL and DPI to understand how staff were implementing SEL practices within one school. CASEL research team members administered the staff survey in one Wisconsin elementary school whose principal attended the DPI lead trainings. The CASEL Staff Implementation Survey measures the entire school staff's perceptions of their systemic SEL implementation efforts. Thirteen school staff respondents completed the survey, representing a 64% response rate. The elementary school is characterized by the state as a K-5 school with an enrollment of 276 students who are majority White (86%).

Using these three data sources, CASEL and DPI co-created four insights that tell the story of how state-level professional learning is received by educators (feedback surveys and interviews, Insights 1 & 2), how district and school leaders intend to leverage the learning to implement systemic SEL (staff implementation surveys and interviews, Insight 3), and ultimately how these efforts lead to school-level implementation (feedback survey, interviews, and staff implementation survey, Insight 4).

Insight 1: The scope and sequence of a state education agency's SEL trainings need to be purposeful and followed, beginning with a foundational understanding of systemic SEL and then focusing on how districts and schools can build capacity to engage in the work systemically.

For the past two years, DPI has hosted ongoing professional learning on systemic SEL implementation to educators throughout Wisconsin. These opportunities provide clarity on policies and practices that inform and influence the ways in which districts and schools flexibly implement systemic SEL. The sequence of the trainings starts with a broader scope around the foundational understanding of systemic SEL, then focuses more narrowly on how to build capacity to engage in the work. In the sequence of the trainings (see Figure 4), DPI mandates that Day 1 is a prerequisite for Day 2. In fact, according to the feedback survey data, we found over half (67%) of participating educators attended both Day 1 & 2 training.

Moving Forward with SEL: Day 1

1st training was based on an overview of all four focus areas that make up the key components of CASEL's Theory of Action, which outlines a systemic approach to SEL.

Moving Forward with SEL: Day 2

2nd training is a deeper dive into the strategies and practice that are specifically used to promote systemic SEL implementation.

Moving Forward with SEL: Train the Trainer

Occurring after Day 2 training, Train the Trainer offers guidance and resources that equip attendees to become trainers to better prepare others to become systemic SEL implementors.

Systemic SEL is complex and multifaceted, and CASEL and DPI believe both training days are critical to implementing high-quality systemic SEL. According to the interviews, if Day 1 and Day 2 trainings were both attended, educators' definition and approach to SEL was more systemic. This is indicated by educators' decision to make their first action steps, after the training, activities related to Focus Area 1 (i.e., Build Foundational Support and Create a Plan). The interviews also illuminated that educators who had gone through the training sequence had greater awareness of what is truly required to systemically implement SEL, with the trainings giving them a perspective that included both breadth and depth of the work. In the interview, a counselor at the school level reflected on the impact the training had for her and her SEL team's understanding of building a foundation (Focus Area 1):

"I think it [DPI training] was very systematic. They started with ground one. Our small team of four people from the middle school took the CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL. We took the rubric individually, and then we did it together. We came to a consensus, and that gave us a starting point for where to go, and then they provided information on different tools like assembling an SEL team, defining team member roles and responsibilities, and SEL team checklist, so it was just very thorough. And we talked about the 'why.' What is our mission and vision? We were able to really go through the team and say, 'OK let's look at all of this.'"—Kerry

Not only does the data demonstrate that both days are needed, some believe that additional training, technical assistance (TA), and coaching may be needed to fully implement systemic SEL. For example, a district-level administrator expressed the need for additional trainings to be added to the sequence to continue to deepen their learning and SEL work:

> *"...a lot of places [districts and schools] around the state are at different places, but I almost feel like I would appreciate this [training] like every four to five months. They had Day 1 and Day 2, but it would be nice to go back now for a Day 3 and 4 with some of our team, and then learn and work."—Adrian*

Offering the trainings was an opportunity for district- and school-level SEL teams to come together and collaborate within and across teams. Trainees were able to convene together over multiple trainings to focus exclusively on systemic SEL implementation. Interviewees found this time to be very helpful for continuing strategic planning they had been engaging with as a district. One interviewee said, "It gave us time as a team to then collaborate and get some ideas started, an action steps, so that was great." Time limitations and constraints have long been a challenge in the field of education. For SEL to be implemented systemically, time is valued as a commodity because it is often quoted as what is needed the most when attempting to get SEL off the ground successfully in a district or school.

The data suggest that it is key that SEAs communicate the importance of following the SEL training sequence to maximize their impact. When educators follow the sequence, they can truly construct their learning around foundational planning and then move to deeper learning about the facets of systemic SEL implementation.

School leaders play a critical role in fostering environments that support academic, social, and emotional development of both students and teachers. Research has shown that the most influential predictor to successful and lasting schoolwide change is school leader support (Fullan, 2011). According to a randomized controlled trial, administrative support (i.e., rates of principal attendance at training) has very strong effects on teachers' perceptions of the implementation of an evidence-based SEL program in classrooms (Domitrovich, Li, Mathis, & Greenberg, 2019).

Each CASEL theory of action offers ways leaders can cultivate a sense of shared responsibility over SEL implementation. It is thus essential for leaders to have a clear sense of what systemic SEL is and understand the actions and activities they should engage in to implement SEL systemically.

Further, when leaders attend and participate in professional learning opportunities with their staff, they communicate that SEL is a priority and that they are committed to building trusting relationships and meaningful collaboration amongst staff. When staff support and trust one another, they are better able to form strong professional communities, to feel more committed to their school, to share knowledge and expertise, and to work productively toward collective academic, social, and emotional goals (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Modoono, 2017), which are key components of Focus Area 2 (Strengthen Adult SEL).

The data confirmed previous research findings—school leaders are critical for successful implementation. Analysis of the feedback survey demonstrated that educators who attended the training with a school leader reported they had significantly more opportunities to collaborate with each other and build relational trust compared to those who did not attend with a school leader (see Figure 5), providing support for Focus Area 2, strengthening adult SEL competencies and capacities.

To better understand the influence of leaders on systemic SEL implementation after staff attended DPI trainings, we asked our interview participants about leadership. We chose interview participants who had attended the trainings and been actively implementing some aspect of systemic SEL in their school or district. Nearly all school-level interviewees (80%) explicitly mentioned that a school leader attended the training with them and all school-level interviewees (100%) indicated that their school leader was involved in some aspect of their school's action planning and support of systemic schoolwide SEL implementation.
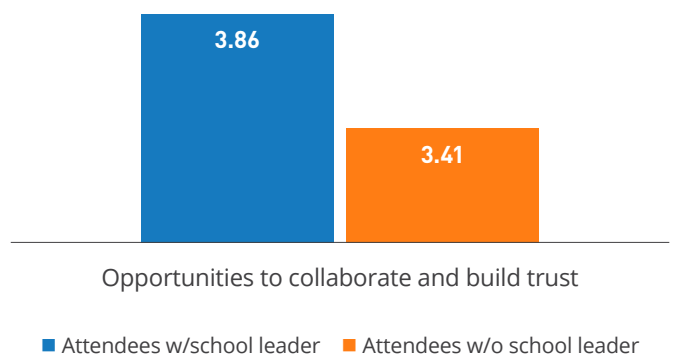

3.86 | 3.41

Opportunities to collaborate and build trust

■ Attendees w/school leader   ■ Attendees w/o school leader

FIGURE 5.
Feedback survey results illustrating significant mean differences between training attendees that came with a school leader compared to those who did not. Significance was determined by independent t-tests at p<0.05.

A school-level leader who was interviewed expressed that school leaders are essential and must be involved in supporting systemic SEL:

> "It's important for principals to be at the training. **They have to own it to share it.** Going [to the trainings] provides the space to think of how their school context will color their implementation efforts."

Interview participants also recognized the importance of district leadership, with 67% of the interviewees mentioning that they contributed to their district's SEL efforts as well, also confirming the need for CASEL's multi-level theories of action.

> "**A lot of what is needed to move things forward, in general, comes from the school leaders**. … I absolutely think the principal is necessary at those trainings. Maybe it's backwards, but at times I feel like information kind of comes from the principals, then makes it to everybody. Then the district kind of says, 'Everybody let's get ready to jump onto this.' And so it's like a little bit of a backwards process where the district doesn't just disseminate and say, here we go. Though that sometimes can be a lengthy process. I would rather as a principal know and be a part of workshops than someone tell me how I'm going to run it."—Courtney, Principal

In all, leadership, especially school leadership, is critical to systemic SEL implementation. This finding substantiates that principals are key actors in introducing, implementing, and sustaining a schoolwide SEL initiative. School leaders' attendance also communicates that they value the initiative and that they are committed to promoting systemic SEL, which motivates staff to work towards these goals. The positive impact of school leader support is felt across multiple focus areas. When SEAs set out to strengthen adult SEL competencies and leadership through training, they need the buy-in and participation of district and school leadership.

Insight 3: It is pivotal for district and school leaders to first examine and leverage the existing initiatives when planning and integrating systemic SEL implementation.

As mentioned earlier, the first questions that arise when thinking strategically about SEL implementation are "Where are we now?" and "Where do we want to go?" These questions are embedded in the Organize phase of the continuous improvement approach.

Addressing these questions is often done by conducting an inventory of current and past programs and initiatives. This requires thinking critically about initiatives that have been successful, those that did not meet the needs of the students well, and how SEL programming can fit into existing priorities and structures allows teams to plan strategically about where to leverage SEL programming.

It was evident that for Wisconsin educators, PBIS provided this opportunity for SEL, making the integration of these efforts critical to success in schools. When integrating tiered supports with SEL, it is important to recognize that SEL is neither solely behavior support nor solely academic support but aligns with and complements both behavioral and academic supports at all tiers.

Given Wisconsin's emphasis on PBIS and the need to integrate SEL, many educators spoke about their integration efforts across most of the data collected. One school leader's first steps after the DPI training was better understanding how PBIS and SEL could be integrated.

> *"We took the [School Guide Theory of Action] rubric as a team. We also created and completed a matrix to see how PBIS and SEL we're aligning. We thought deeply about integration of SEL with PBIS, which was already being implemented."—Stephen, Assistant Principal*

It is clear that there is a need for PBIS and SEL teams to work in tandem on integrating the two together in all their implementation efforts. All interviewees mentioned how PBIS and SEL integration was aiding in the way they approached SEL systemically. Half of interviewees spoke about integration of PBIS as an indicator to look for when observing schoolwide SEL. One-third of interviewees mentioned how work in their district started with conducting a matrix to visualize where PBIS and SEL initiatives overlap so they could be easily identified and integrated. A third of interviewees indicated that members of the PBIS coaching team attended the DPI trainings because those PBIS team members are, or would, also become members of the district SEL team. Half of the interviewees also mentioned PBIS integration when they described how systemic SEL implementation was going in their district.

Evidence provided from the CASEL Staff Implementation Survey also presented high levels of agreement among school staff around integration. All school staff (100%) agreed the SEL team is responsible for ensuring that all programs and initiatives that address students' SEL are integrated in meaningful ways. Most of staff (83%) agreed that their school collected information about their current SEL practices, policies, resources, and needs within the last year. These findings highlight the impact of schoolwide integration on other aspects of SEL implementation at the school level.
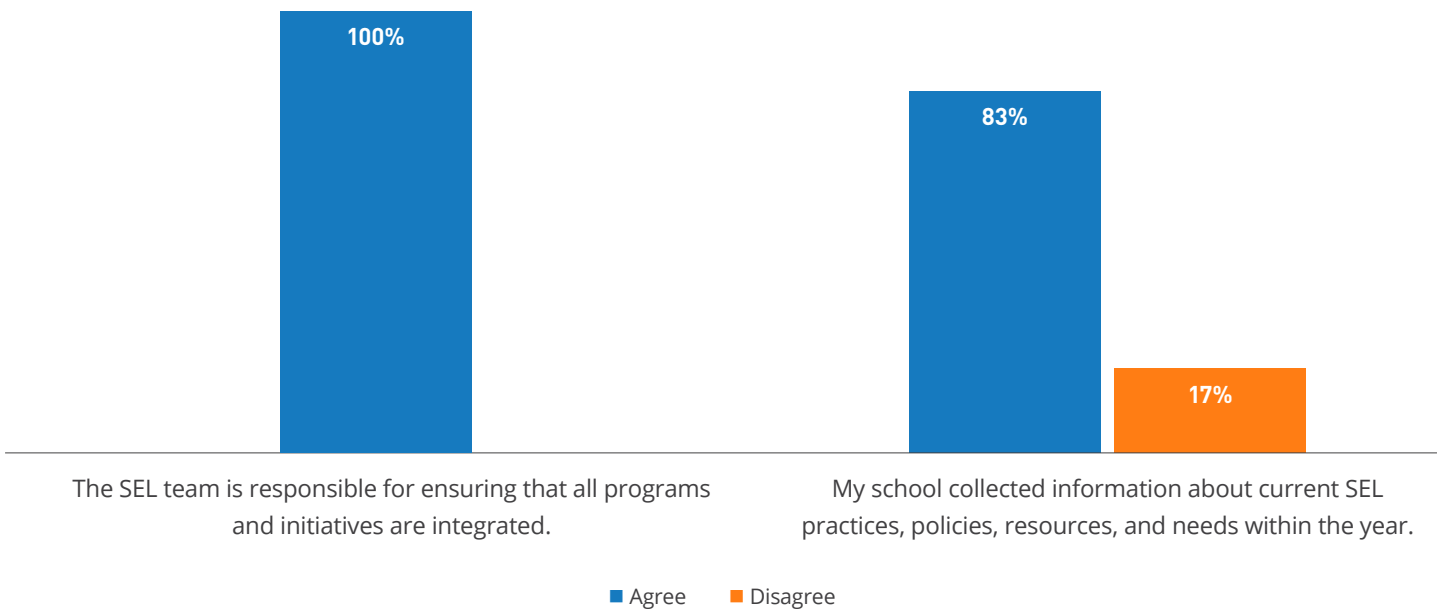
FIGURE 6.
CASEL Staff Implementation Survey results reveal there is a high level of agreement amongst staff perceptions of systemic SEL implementation.

If there are existing initiatives and approaches in place, it is critical to examine how well these initiatives speak to and complement any new innovation, program, or practice. SEL and PBIS provide a strong link between social and emotional development and academic success. Both are proactive approaches centered on promoting positive skills and environments rather than punitive or exclusionary discipline. Aligning the SEL framework with PBIS action plans will make a positive impact on both individual student outcomes and the overall school climate. To maximize the combined impact of SEL and PBIS, schools not only need a strong understanding of each approach, but also guidance for integration through SEA training.

Insight 4: Quality guidance, resources, and technical assistance from an SEA positively influences educators' definition of and approach to systemic SEL implementation.

DPI's trainings provided much needed guidance and resources that influenced attendees' thinking about and actions towards systemic SEL. Educators who had gone through the Day 1 training had greater awareness of all of what is required to systemically implement SEL. The Day 1 training gave them a perspective that included both breadth and depth of the work that those that did not attend may lack. Figure 7 below shows difference between levels of agreement on the feedback surveys between educators that attended Day 1 training and those that did not.
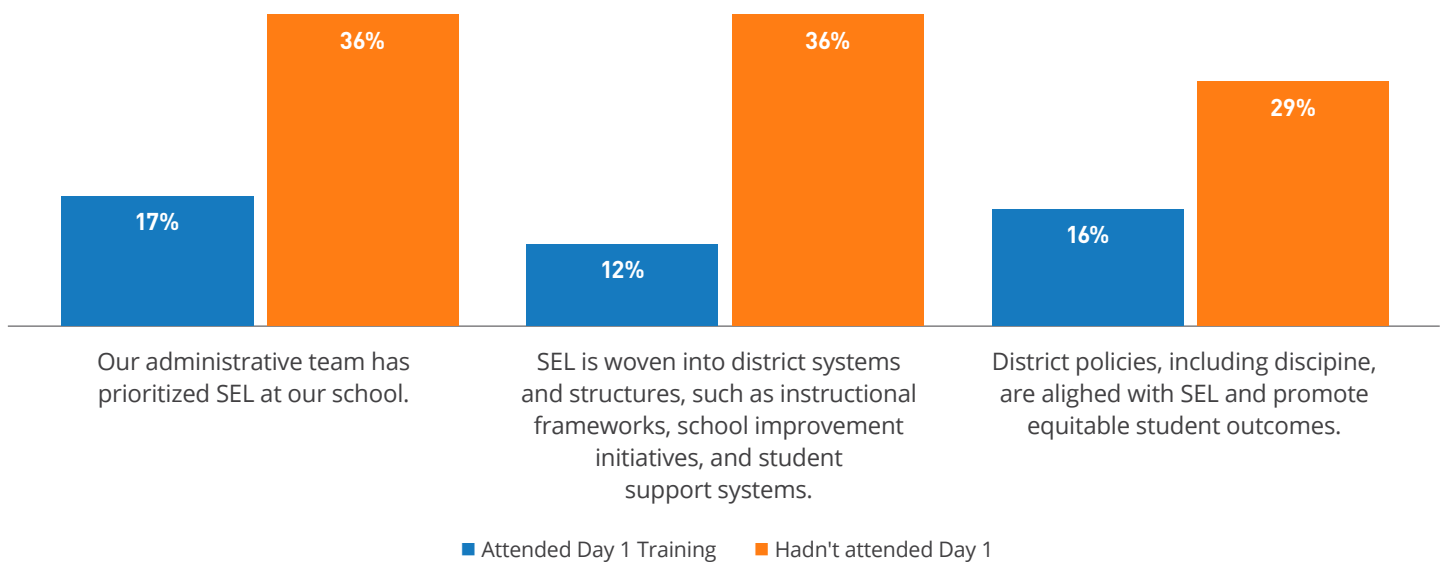

Our administrative team has prioritized SEL at our school. — Attended Day 1 Training 17%, Hadn't attended Day 1 36%

SEL is woven into district systems and structures, such as instructional frameworks, school improvement initiatives, and student support systems. — Attended Day 1 Training 12%, Hadn't attended Day 1 36%

District policies, including discipline, are alighed with SEL and promote equitable student outcomes. — Attended Day 1 Training 16%, Hadn't attended Day 1 29%

■ Attended Day 1 Training   ■ Hadn't attended Day 1

FIGURE 7.
Feedback survey results reported that those Day 2 participating educators who attended Day 1 training had lower levels of agreement when asked about aspects of their SEL implementation than those who had not yet attended Day 1 but attended Day 2 training.

With regards to approaching SEL systemically by building foundational support (Focus Area 1), 83% of the interviewees mentioned their first actionable step after training was addressing some aspect of foundational planning in implementation. Most interviewees said they were working to build a SEL team with the right stakeholders at the table, ensuring there was a clear SEL vision and plan in place, and conducting an inventory of their SEL related programs & initiatives.

> *"We formally put together an SEL team that would meet regularly and see how we can infuse SEL throughout the building. One of the other first steps after the Day 1 training was to look at what everyone was doing, to take stock at the SEL work they were already engaging in. We completed the [School Guide theory of action] rubric."—Kerry, school-level counselor*
>
> *"The trainings allowed us to brainstorm new ideas about SEL implementation as a team, so we were able to collaborate. We were also able to begin scoping out our three-year plan and strategy before the training. Then, after the training, the plan is to continue to adjust that and build off of that plan."—Shannon, school-level SEL coach*

When asked about DPI's role in supporting systemic SEL implementation in schools and districts, interviewees expressed a range of responses from general guidance to more specific supports and resources based on where a district may be in their SEL implementation journey. They also mentioned more coaching around strategic planning and the challenging aspects of systemic implementation. Kerry, a school counselor, also stated her expectations from DPI related to guidance for SEL:

> *"I think as leaders and just helping us know where to go. Like I said … this is my 18th year as a counselor. I've been doing SEL-type lessons for years but didn't have a framework like we have now with specific steps. Like, OK, these are some things to put into place and so that Day 1 of Moving Forward really helped."*

Training provided by DPI had a tremendous impact on educators' intentional approach to implementation of systemic SEL; so much so that they not only grasped the importance of building a strong foundational understanding of SEL through Focus Area 1, but were also engaging in the continuous improvement of efforts.

As stated throughout this learning series, continuous improvement is critical to the ongoing improvement of SEL strategies and practices that have been employed, so Focus Area 4 is equally important as Focus Area 1. Staff that completed the implementation survey overwhelmingly agreed (92%) that they were aware that data are collected regularly on students' social and emotional skills in order to identify schoolwide trends, strengths, and needs. Most staff (85%) also agreed that they were aware that school climate data was being compiled and reflected on throughout the year by school leadership, staff, or the SEL team.

Interviewees displayed their systemic thinking by also referring to elements of continuous improvement throughout their responses that related to their implementation efforts. They raised their concerns and showed interest in changing the way they collect student data. They stressed the importance of incorporating student voice via student interviews and focus groups and empowering students to create assessments to measure their own SEL skills. They also mentioned the need to survey teachers to make room for their voice in order to improve professional learning opportunities as a continuous improvement element to enhance the adult SEL expertise and capacity and to heighten their experience.

SEAs are critical to districts' and schools' understanding of systemic SEL implementation. Their far-reaching influence and guidance can assist in making high-quality SEL a part of every public school students' learning experience. Wisconsin educators have put forth much effort into implementing SEL in their districts and schools; however, systemic SEL implementation is complex, and educators have expressed a need for continued support and leadership. DPI is positioned to not only fulfill these needs by continuing to offer trainings more consistently, but also provide additional opportunities for educators to learn from and collaborate with DPI.

State education agencies like Wisconsin's DPI create policies and provide opportunities, guidance, and access to resources and tools so that school and district teams can be more equipped to launch their own systemic SEL implementation endeavors. Systemic integration of SEL into district priorities ensures that integration will become vital to the success of the district itself, its schools, classrooms, and students. When schools create frameworks that consist of common SEL language and goals along with integrating supports for students, implementation is less fragmented and more cohesive and systemic. Schools in turn have multiple initiatives and programs that are geared toward positive outcomes in students. Ultimately the goal of positively impacting student and adult outcomes and experiences in schools will be accomplished.

» RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these initial partnership insights:

1. SEAs should communicate the importance of following the training sequence to maximize the impact of systemic SEL trainings. When the sequence is followed, it allows educators to truly construct their learning around foundational planning and then move to deeper learning about the facets of systemic SEL implementation.

2. Leadership, especially school leadership, is critical to systemic SEL implementation. Principals serve as key levers for introducing, implementing, and sustaining a schoolwide SEL initiative.

3. SEA policies and guidance should provide additional insight to district and school leaders on how to strategically plan to integrate existing initiatives with current or future SEL implementation efforts.

4. SEAs are critical to districts' and schools' understanding of systemic SEL implementation. Their far-reaching influence and guidance can assist in making high-quality SEL apart of every public school students' learning experience.

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