



KEY FEATURES OF HIGH-QUALITY POLICIES AND GUIDELINES TO SUPPORT SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Recommendations and Examples for State Policy Leaders

This document is intended for state education agencies (SEAs) that want to implement high-quality policies and guidelines for social and emotional learning (SEL). It serves two purposes:

First, it provides an overview of six key features of a high-quality, comprehensive package of policies and guidance to support student and adult SEL. These features are based on the Collaborative for Academic Social, and Emotional Learning's (CASEL's) definition of SEL and review of the research literature on learning standards and SEL.¹ The six key features represent policies and guidance that are comprehensive and robust in that they are culturally and developmentally appropriate, as well as connected to equity, positive learning environments, career and workforce development, and professional development (Figure 1).

Second, this document provides examples from other states and national organizations that illustrate each of the key features of high-quality policies and guidance for SEL.

How to Use This Document

It is recommended that this document be used by SEAs in combination with process documents, including the CSI Recommended Process for Developing State Policies and Guidelines to Support Social and Emotional Learning, the [CASEL State Theory of Action](#), and the [Developmental Framework for Integrating SEL With Career and Workforce Development](#).

¹ Dusenbury, L., Zadrazil, J., Weissberg, R., Goren, P., Domitrovich, C., & Mart, A. (2015). Developing a blueprint for education in social and emotional learning, preschool through high school: The case for state learning standards. In J. Durlak, C. Domitrovich, R. Weissberg, & T. Gullotta (Eds.), *Handbook of social and emotional learning: Research and practice*. New York, NY: Guilford.

Developed by



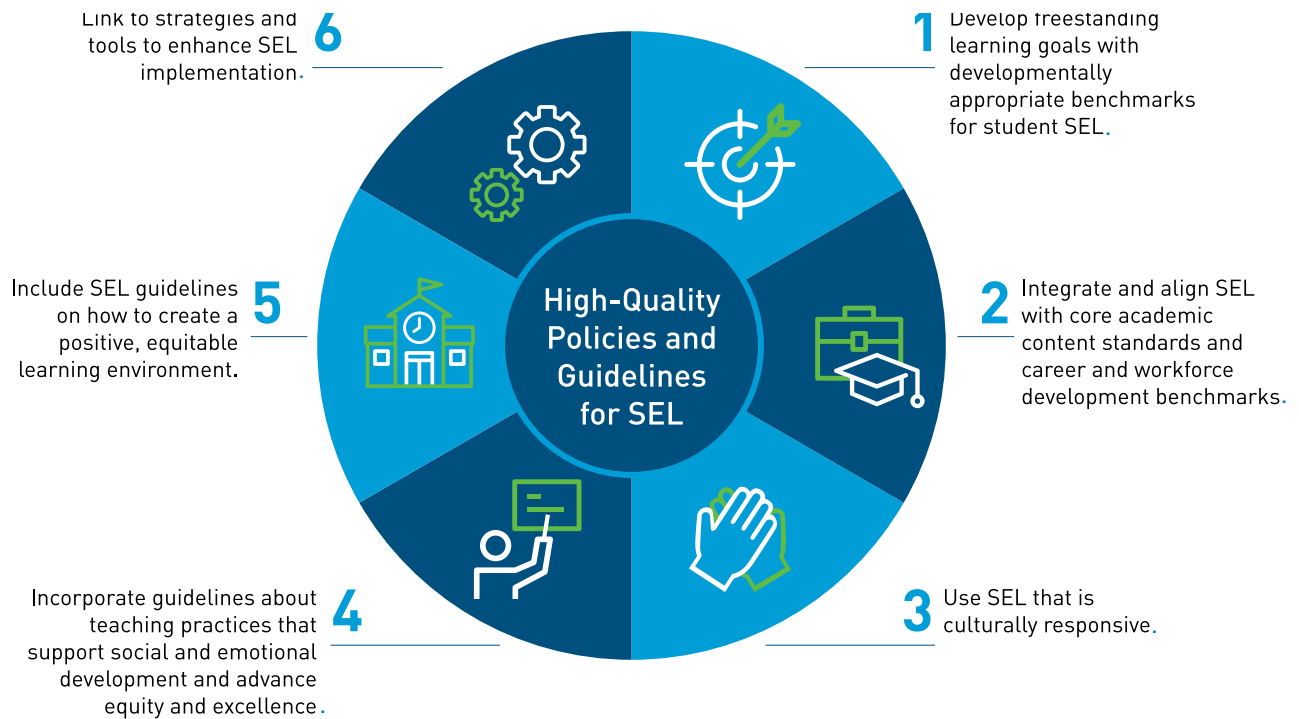


Figure 1. Key Features of High-Quality Policies and Guidelines for SEL



1. Develop clearly stated, freestanding learning goals with developmentally appropriate benchmarks for student SEL, preschool through high school.

To support student development, it is important to have a clear definition of the competencies and skills students should develop across grade levels. One approach is to begin by articulating a framework and learning goals for SEL that are freestanding, developmentally appropriate, and comprehensive. Identifying these learning goals (sometimes called “competencies” or “standards” in state policy) is important because they establish social and emotional development as a clear priority in education, aligned with but distinct from academic and content goals (i.e., freestanding). Comprehensive learning goals for SEL include developmental benchmarks/indicators across social and emotional competency domains (e.g., self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills) with equity considerations. High-quality, freestanding SEL goals or competencies provide concise, consistent statements, grounded in research, about what students should know and be able to do socially and emotionally with specific age ranges and respect to different cultural contexts.



SEL Standards Examples

Link

California Transformative SEL Competencies

[Access webpage](#)

Delaware SEL Competencies

[View PDF](#)

Iowa SEL Competencies

[View PDF](#)

Kansas SEL and Character Development (SECD) Standards

[Access webpage](#)

Mississippi SEL Standards

[Access webpage](#)

Montana SEL Competencies

[View PDF](#)

Virginia SEL Guidance Standards

[Access webpage](#)



2. Integrate and align SEL with core academic content standards and career and workforce development competencies, standards, or benchmarks, as well as other priorities (e.g., mental wellness, trauma-sensitive, character development, or civic engagement).

SEL competencies are similar to, but distinct from, core academic content standards. They differ in that the development of social and emotional competencies is recursive; we constantly relearn and apply these competences across our lives in multiple cultural contexts. Social and emotional competencies are about personal development, enabling students to cultivate the future-ready skills they need to be successful in school and life in a global society. Many states are recognizing the critical advantage of integrating SEL with academics and other strategic priorities, especially career and workforce development efforts, as a strengths-based approach to improving postsecondary outcomes in equitable and sustainable ways. Post secondary success is built on solid personal and interpersonal skills across different backgrounds and experiences. Naming, defining, measuring, and building these skills offer an invitation to deepen the integration of SEL with career and workforce development. In a similar way, SEL can be integrated with mental wellness, trauma-sensitivity, character development, multi-tiered system of supports, or civic engagement to support the goals.

SEL Integrated With Academic Standards Examples

Link

Arizona SEL and Academic Competencies

[View PDF](#)

North Carolina SEL Academic Standards Mapping

[View PDF](#)

Massachusetts SEL In Math

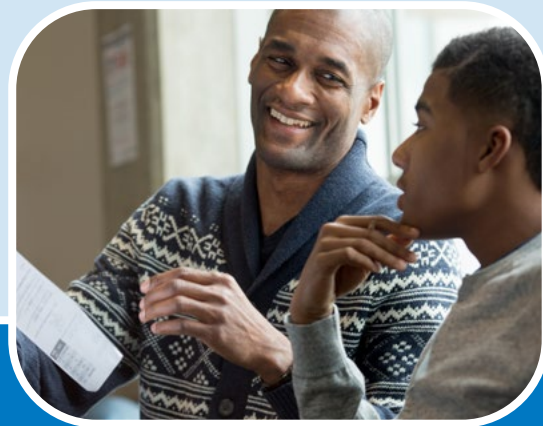
[Access webpage](#)

SEL Integrated Within a Multi-tiered System of Supports Examples

Link

Integrating Social and Emotional Learning Within a Multi-tiered System of Supports to Advance Equity

[Access webpage](#)



SEL Integrated With Career and Workforce Development

Examples

Link

Respected: Perspectives of Youth on High School & Social and Emotional Learning

[View PDF](#)

Delaware SEL and Work-Based Learning Crosswalk

[View PDF](#)

Department of Education: Perkins Collaborative Resource Network Employability Framework

[Access Webpage](#)

Kansas Digital Reference Guide

[View PDF](#)

Pennsylvania Career Readiness Skills inclusive of SEL

[Access Webpage](#)

Massachusetts myCareer and Academic Plan

[Access Webpage](#)

South Carolina Portrait of a Graduate and CASEL Crosswalk

[View PDF](#)

Rhode Island SEL is Important in the Workplace Videos

[Access Webpage](#)



3. Use SEL that is culturally responsive.

Social and emotional behaviors are mediated through an individual's social and cultural lens, including their cultural histories, practices found within their communities, and their personal identities. It is important to recognize the influence culture has on the ways we use our social and emotional competencies. When developing SEL guidelines and policies, states should incorporate guidance on how to make SEL instruction and practice culturally responsive. It is important for educators to recognize their own cultural lenses and respect and support the cultural experiences of their students. For example, cultures differ in their communication styles, making it important to consider the culture of students, families, and caregivers and engage them in the development of social awareness and relationship skills that will be effective in different contexts.

Culturally Responsive Instruction Examples	Link
CCSSO Promising Practices Advancing Equity Commitments (state examples)	View PDF
Culturally Responsive Education in ESSA Plans	Read the Article
Illinois Culturally Responsive Teaching Standards	View PDF
Learning Policy Institute (LPI): A Restorative Approach for Equitable Education	Access Webpage



**Culturally Responsive Instruction (cont.)
Examples**

Link

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Culturally Responsive Social-Emotional Competency Development

[Access Webpage](#)

Minnesota Transformative SEL and Cultural Competency Learning Module

[Access Webpage](#)

Washington SEL Implementation Brief: Focus on Culturally Responsive Practices

[Read the Brief](#)

Wisconsin Model to Inform Culturally Responsive Practices

[Access Webpage](#)



4. Incorporate guidelines about teaching practices that support social and emotional development and advance equity and excellence.

Educators can support student social and emotional development by creating equitable learning environments, implementing evidence-based SEL programs, and integrating SEL with academic content and career and workforce development goals. In these efforts, it is important to engage SEL instructional practices that are informed by the cultures and traditions represented in the school’s community. To support implementation, states should provide guidance and professional learning on how adults develop their own social and emotional competencies. Administrators and staff should receive professional learning on culturally responsive teaching practices, SEL implementation, and workforce development pathways to ensure they are equipped to address each student’s developmental needs, skills, strengths, interests, and aspirations.

Adult Teaching Practices Examples	Link
American Institute of Research (AIR): Social and Emotional Learning Coaching Toolkit	View PDF
AIR, Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety, and National University: Instructional Practices that Integrate Equity-Centered Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning	Read the Brief
Act for Youth Center for Excellence: SEL Toolkit	Access the Toolkit
CASEL CSI Resources: Teacher Practices	View Webpage



Adult Teaching Practices (cont.)

Examples

Link

CASEL: What Does Evidence-Based Instruction in Social and Emotional Learning Actually Look Like in Practice

[View PDF](#)

Center for Great Teachers and Leaders: Self-Assessing Social and Emotional Instruction and Competencies: A Tool for Teachers

[Access Webpage](#)

Massachusetts Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice (UDL, SEL, and PBIS)

[Access Webpage](#)

Minnesota Social and Emotional Learning Modules

[Access Webpage](#)

New York State Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education Framework

[View PDF](#)



5. Include SEL guidelines on how to create a positive, equitable learning environment.

When students learn and educators work in an environment that is safe, supportive, just, and connected to caregivers and community, students and adults are more likely to develop the social and emotional competencies they need to be successful. It is therefore critical to provide guidance on how SEL contributes to conditions for learning and conditions for teaching.

Development of a Positive School Climate Examples	Link
AIR: School Climate and Social and Emotional Learning: The Integration of Two Approaches	Read the Brief
California Conditions for Thriving	Access Webpage
Illinois Examples of a Positive School Climate	Access Webpage
LPI: Building a Positive School Climate	Read the Brief
National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE)	Access Webpage
Nevada School Climate Social Emotional Learning Survey	Access Survey
NCSSLE School Climate Improvement Resource Package	Access Webpage
Ohio School Climate Guidelines	View PDF



6. Link to strategies and tools to enhance SEL implementation.

The primary goal of the development of social and emotional competencies is to develop educators' skills in understanding the knowledge and abilities that students need to successfully navigate their own school experiences, post-secondary paths, and life choices. It is important, therefore, to link to tools that support high-quality implementation, including tools to select SEL programs, support adult social and emotional well-being, and assess SEL for continuous improvement.

Tools that Support High Quality Implementation	
Examples	Link
CASEL: Collaborating States Initiative SEA Theory of Action	Read the Report
CASEL: SEL Implementation Tools and Resources	Access Webpage
CASEL: State Resource Center	Access Webpage
SEL in California: A Guide to Resources	View PDF
Delaware SEL Toolkits	Access Webpage
Minnesota Implementation Guidance	Access Webpage
New York State SEL: A Guide to Systemic Whole School Implementation	Read the Report
North Carolina SEL Implementation Resources	Access Webpage
Washington SEL Implementation Guide	View PDF

Tools for Selecting SEL Programs Examples

Link

CASEL: Guide to SEL Programs

[Explore the Tool](#)

Massachusetts Guidelines on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Curricula K-12

[View the Document](#)

Wisconsin Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum and Alignment Tools

[Access Webpage](#)

Tools that Support High Quality Professional Development Examples

Link

CASEL State Resource Center Professional Development

[Access Webpage](#)

LPI: Preparing Teachers to Support Social and Emotional Learning

[Read the Report](#)

Massachusetts SEL and Mental Health Academy

[Access Webpage](#)

Minnesota SEL District Implementation and Professional Development Guidance

[View PDF](#)

New Jersey SEL Modules for Educators

[Access Webpage](#)

Washington State SEL Online Modules

[View PDF](#)

Wisconsin's Mental Health, SEL, Trauma & Safety Online Training Materials

[View PDF](#)



Tools that Support SEL Assessment Examples

Link

AIR: Are You Ready to Assess Social and Emotional Learning and Development

[Access Webpage](#)

CASEL: SEL Assessment Guide

[Access the Tool](#)

CASEL: State Resource Center SEL Assessment

[Access the Tool](#)

CASEL: Selecting SEL Assessments That Are Rigorous, Reasonable, and Relevant Webinar

[Access Webpage](#)

Kansas Measuring Social-Emotional Growth Locally Toolkit

[View PDF](#)

LPI: Encouraging SEL in the Context of New Accountability

[Read the Report](#)

Minnesota Department of Education SEL Assessment Guide

[Download the Report](#)

NCCSSLE: School climate Survey Compendium

[Access Webpage](#)

Wisconsin Understanding the Differences: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competence Assessment and Social, Emotional, and Behavioral (SEB) Screening and Assessment

[View PDF](#)

CONCLUSION

States help encourage high quality SEL when they develop a comprehensive set of policies, guidance, and frameworks to support SEL. For more information (including examples from other states) see the CASEL Collaborating States Initiatives, State Theory of Action, and [State Resource Center](#).

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