REFOCUS ON THE SEL ROADMAP

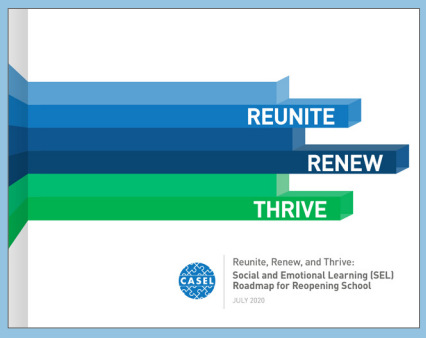
ACTIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SECOND SEMESTER

At the start of this unprecedented school year, many schools prioritized or re-prioritized social and emotional learning (SEL) to foster the competencies and learning environments that students and adults need to reunite, renew, and thrive.

As we enter the second half of the school year, many students will make new transitions -- from distance learning back to in-person learning, or vice versa -- and SEL remains as important as ever. It's a good time to re-examine our efforts to make needed adjustments and refocus on supportive relationships, equitable environments, and the academic, social, and emotional development and overall well-being of all students and adults.

Adapted from Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: SEL Roadmap for Reopening School

In July 2020, CASEL collaborated with more than 40 partners to illuminate a way forward as educators nationwide prepared to welcome students and adults back to school — in whatever form that took — to reunite, renew, and thrive. The SEL Roadmap centered on relationships and built on the existing strengths of a school community.



For additional resources, tools, and guidance visit the *Reunite, Renew and Thrive: SEL Roadmap for Reopening School*

Below are three strategies, adapted from *Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: Social and Emotional Learning Roadmap for Reopening Schools,* to help prepare for a successful second semester based on insights into how schools districts nationwide have prioritized SEL this year:

- Partner with staff, students, families, and communities to examine data from the first semester on students' and adults' experiences and social, emotional, and academic outcomes.
- Refocus on adult connections, self-care, competencies, and capacity.
- Maintain safe, supportive, and equitable learning environments and continuously promote all students' social and emotional development.

Partner with staff, students, families, and communities to examine data from the first semester on students' and adults' experiences and social, emotional, and academic outcomes.

ACTION STEPS

- If you haven't already, collect data that elevates students' perspectives, experiences, and outcomes. For example, use assessments or surveys to capture data on students' levels of engagement, perspectives on learning and school/ classroom environments, and their strengths (including their social and emotional competencies) and needs.
- Create time and space for groups of staff, students, families, and community partners to convene around data review and collaborative problem-solving. Review implementation (school and classroom practices) and outcome (student social and emotional competencies, school climate, attendance, etc.) data through formal and informal processes with members of the school community to guide instruction and improvement.
- Examine root causes of patterns and disparities in data, including potential barriers that may inequitably impact student outcomes and experiences. Encourage people to reflect on what they are learning by asking: Does what was shared mostly match your experience? Do you see yourself reflected in the data?
- Invite students, staff, families, and partners to provide input on plans to improve student experiences and outcomes, such as changes to curriculum, instructional practices, community-building strategies, discipline/ attendance policies, or supports to those who have been most impacted by the social, health, and economic challenges of this period. Ensure input from those who are historically marginalized.
- Consider what additional data, such as implementing more formal social and emotional competency measures, would help inform action steps to meet your goals. If some but not all students are attending school in person, compare outcomes between groups to highlight both inequity and success stories for continuous improvement.

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TOOLS

- Understand and Improve Students' Learning Experiences **(PERTS—Project for Education Research that Scales).** Copilot-Elevate helps educators customize a short survey to learn how students are experiencing school, review results to see how school experiences are promoting or hindering equitable learning, learn new practices to try with students, and track improvement over time.
- Strategies for Gathering Student Feedback **(CASEL).** Choose from or adapt these methods for hearing from your students about their learning experience in the new school year, whether instruction and learning is taking place at school or elsewhere.
- SEL Data Reflection Protocol **(CASEL).** This tool presents a structured reflection process for SEL teams and other school stakeholders to observe trends and discuss ideas for continuous improvement of SEL implementation. It emphasizes the importance of examining data with an equity lens and elevating a range of perspectives when interpreting data.

Refocus on adult connections, self-care, competencies, and capacity.

ACTION STEPS

- Establish or re-establish dedicated space, time, and agreements for staff to come together to strengthen their relationships, process, and problem solve together. For example, hold virtual or in-person circles or other opportunities for staff to share their emotions and experiences from the first half of the school year, and identify innovations or improvements to try in the second semester.
- Review how well work conditions and school structures support educator well-being. Check in on staff self-care plans, needs, and overall wellness. Establish or re-establish schoolwide expectations that promote self-care such as avoiding emails or phone/video calls on evenings and weekends. Check in with community partners and assess how well school processes are connecting staff with additional supports, including culturally responsive trauma and mental health support when needed.
- Review data on professional learning outcomes and staff capacity for supporting students. Establish or re-establish professional learning communities and opportunities that engage staff in learning about and building skills for SEL, trauma-informed practices, creating equitable learning environments, and culturally responsive practices.

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TOOLS

- Educator Resilience and Trauma-Informed Self-Care: Self-Assessment and Planning Tool **(Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at AIR).** This self-care assessment asks teachers to first reflect on their current self-care practices and then helps them build a plan for the future. This can be a useful starting point for reviewing and improving schoolwide expectations and practices to promote staff well-being.
- SEL Effort Inventory and Analysis **(CASEL).** This interview protocol and inventory template can be used to review both schoolwide SEL efforts and efforts used by individuals and school partners to prioritize the most impactful practices for the future.
- Create a Professional Learning Plan for SEL **(CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL).** This chart can help to organize a customized professional learning plan for school staff that is clearly tied to the schoolwide goals for SEL, can be assessed for effectiveness throughout the year, draws upon available resources, and includes intentional follow-up to ensure that new practices are sustained.

Maintain safe, supportive, and equitable learning environments and continuously promote all students' social and emotional development.

ACTION STEPS

- Continue to prioritize adult-student as well as peer relationship-building in daily schedules, especially throughout the first two weeks back from winter break or when transitioning from remote learning to in-person classes. Implement ongoing structures such as welcoming students at the door, check-ins, advisory, morning/afternoon meeting structures, or community-building routines (in-person, virtual, or by phone or other means) aligned with the developmental relationships framework that can be informal, regularly scheduled, or a combination.
- Review how schoolwide and classroom SEL programs and practices were implemented and their impact in first semester, and determine what needs to be adjusted or new practices to adopt for second semester. Share insights, discoveries, innovations, and other SEL strategies that have worked well with the whole school community, and discuss what effective practices should continue beyond the pandemic. Ask teachers who have had successful outcomes with these practices to model SEL activities and mentor other teachers.
- Revisit district or state SEL standards and aligned instructional strategies. Identify and provide additional coaching support to guide teachers in building classroom community, explicitly teaching social and emotional competencies through evidence-based programs and practices, and integrating SEL in instructional practices.

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- Update and renew student support plans based on data from screeners, formal and informal check-ins, and families to determine if adequate and effective student supports are provided. Ensure adequate staffing of personnel who are trained to support student well-being (e.g., school counselors, nurses, school psychologists), and continue leveraging existing partnerships with community organizations that provide mental health and trauma services to fill gaps in service.
- Identify ongoing opportunities for family and community partners to lead or co-lead SEL implementation efforts and be receptive to their efforts to engage your school. Continue to seek feedback about how strategies are working and potential ways to modify implementation.

TOOLS

- **Building Developmental Relationships During the COVID-19 Crisis (Search Institute).** This checklist outlines relationship-building strategies during the COVID-19 crisis.
- **SEL Through Distance Learning: Teacher Self-Assessment (CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL).** This self-assessment provides insight into strengths and areas to develop as educators promote SEL through distance learning and at-home assignments.
- **Building Positive Conditions for Learning at Home: Strategies and Resources for Families and Caregivers (AIR).** Four basic elements for parents on fostering emotional health and creating a supportive learning space at home, with concrete strategies in both English and Spanish.

A LOOK BACK AT FIRST SEMESTER: HOW HAVE SCHOOL DISTRICTS PRIORITIZED SEL DURING THE PANDEMIC?

Relationship-Building in Austin

The Austin Independent School District has been promoting SEL by building relationships with adults, students, and the community at large. As Caroline Chase, SEL Assistant Director, explained, "Social and emotional competencies are at the core of being able to move through this really difficult time." She added that adult SEL is critical, asking "How do we take care of adults, so they can take care of our kids?" To that end, the district has worked to build a culture of SEL across every department. For example, the SEL 3 Signature Practices have been embedded at every district meeting. To support students, teachers conducted morning meetings and counseling teams added "one-minute meetings" as continuous check-ins to gather data and evaluate their needs. Middle and high school groups of Students Organizing Against Racism (SOAR) have also given students an outlet to discuss how they're feeling and strengthen their own voices to be anti-racist. In response to the pandemic, the district also increased outreach to build collaboration in the community. Surveys continue to help them understand how to best meet each person as they are, where they are.

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Healing and Wholeness in Baltimore

Baltimore City Public Schools has kept an eye toward healing and wholeness in their approach to SEL. According to Ketia Stokes, Director of Student Wholeness, this means striving to "create bridges over barriers that once existed." One way they are doing this is by engaging in authentic student partnerships to envision what school should look like moving forward. For example, Townhalls provide an opportunity for students to connect with senior leadership to share and respond to ideas to help meet the needs of all students. Additionally, the Youth Ambassadors program situates students as investigators around questions of student engagement, including researching a topic of their choice, conducting empathy interviews, and suggesting solutions to better support and connect all students to learning. Baltimore's approach to healing and wholeness includes educators, too. Last Spring, they engaged restorative practice partners to lead "Caring for the Leader" circles with principals. Along with creating a space for healing, this initiative helped prepare leaders to conduct similar circles for their teachers. It's one thing to learn about these strategies through a webinar or PowerPoint, explained Stokes, but there is nothing like the "power of experience" to prepare leaders to implement SEL.

Trauma-Informed Approach in El Paso

Building on years of SEL implementation, El Paso Independent School District has prioritized a trauma-informed approach. According to Ray Lozano, Executive Director of School Leadership Operations. "There's a lot of healing that needs to take place in our communities... Our kids are in dire need of emotional safety." To support that healing last spring, district staff made over 100,000 calls to check in on families and identify needs using their Student Care Team Check-in Process. The outreach continued through focus groups with parents, which revealed a desire to have closer relationships with their child's school. El Paso incorporated this feedback into their family engagement plan and will continue to solicit parental input. The district added layers of support by infusing SEL into professional development and training educators to recognize signs of trauma, especially in a virtual context. Daily check-ins with students also measure social and emotional health across six dimensions and allow for timely responses and targeted intervention, when needed. As Lozano summarized, "SEL is a bridge... to emotional healing and to provide a deep, rich, and holistic education for our students."

Learn more about how these school districts prioritized SEL to support students and adults during the pandemic (webinar).

Thank you to the collaborators who contributed to the *Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: SEL Roadmap for Reopening School:*