A DEVELOPMENTAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND CAREER AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Coalition for Career Development Center (CCD)

Civic Enterprises

Collaborating States Initiative (CSI) partners

The purpose of this brief is to introduce a developmental framework for states working to systemically integrate evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) with career and workforce development efforts.

Career and workforce development is a well-known, nonpartisan strategy for preparing students for postsecondary success in schools. According to the Coalition for Career Development Center, career development is "a process that informs individuals about career opportunities, helps them identify their talent, become aware of how their talent transfers into a wide range of occupational opportunities and enables them to make effective decisions on the academic and postsecondary pathways that will enable them to pursue their career and life goals" (Coalition for Career Development Center, 2021). Adopting this definition, CASEL uses the term "career and workforce development" to capture the diversity of approaches and efforts employed by states to describe this process and the efforts that support it.

CASEL, the Coalition for Career Development Center, and CIVIC created this developmental framework in collaboration with eight states (Delaware, Kansas, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah, Wisconsin) participating in the CASEL Collaborating States Initiative (CSI) SEL and Career and Workforce Development Community of Practice (CoP). This community of practice supports states advancing the integration of SEL with career and workforce development and fosters relationships in which lessons can be shared, common challenges can be discussed, and innovative ideas can be discovered. Specific strategies for the integration of SEL and career and workforce development efforts are being co-constructed through our partnership with states.

Background

The mission of the CASEL Collaborating States Initiative (CSI) is clear: help states create policy conditions in which districts and schools are encouraged and equipped to engage in systemic social and emotional learning (SEL)[5], so that all students can succeed in school, life, and work.

Since its founding in 2016, the CSI has advanced this mission nationwide, growing from supporting eight states to over 40 states in less than five years. In this time, the member states of the CSI have not only adopted state policies that support evidence-based SEL to advance equity and excellence but also elevated systemic SEL as a method of enhancing strategic goals of the state (Dermody et al., 2018). Based on innovative methods states used to leverage SEL in support of student success, the CSI adopted a strategic focus on systemically integrating SEL and career and workforce development efforts in 2019.

This focus—and the subsequent creation of the SEL Career and Workforce Development CoP—is necessitated by three aspects of today's reality that raise big questions for education:

1. The future of work is quickly changing and is even more uncertain now than it was just two years ago (Dondie et al., 2021). Without knowing what types of jobs will exist in 10 to 20 years, **how can education best prepare students to succeed in the new economy and life?**

2. Top companies are increasingly emphasizing the importance of social and emotional skills for success in the next generation of employees and entrepreneurs (Lieberman, 2021; Yoder, Atwell, Godek, et al., 2020). **How can education equip students with the skills identified by employers as necessary to enter and to thrive in the workforce?**

3. There is an urgent need to advance equitable environments in education generally, and in career and workforce development specifically (Butrymowicz, 2021). **How can education foster more equitable access to and dispel disparities within career and workforce development and positive postsecondary outcomes for students to support a more diverse workforce?**

Facing these realities and considering these questions, the CSI views the systemic integration of SEL with career and workforce development efforts as an essential method of preparing all students for postsecondary success. Research finds that educators, parents, students, and employers agree (Atwell et al., 2021; Atwell & Bridgeland, 2019; Flanagan et al., 2021; Lieberman, 2021): SEL is critical for preparing students for life and work in the future.

5. CASEL defines social and emotional learning (SEL) as an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities (CASEL, 2020).

Framework

This developmental framework aims to assist all states seeking to integrate SEL with career and workforce development efforts systemically so SEAs can support districts and schools in preparing students for postsecondary success.

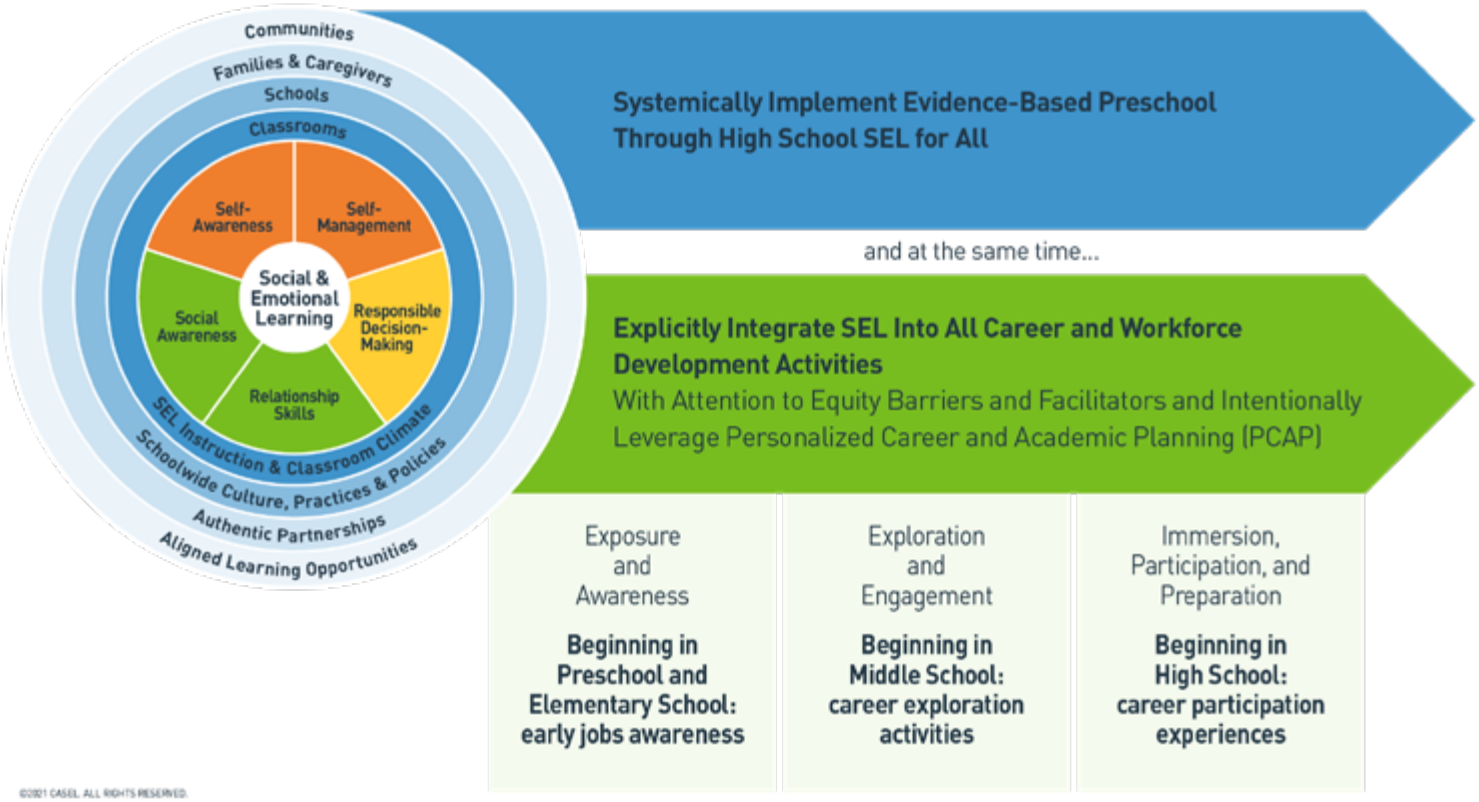

Figure 1: *CSI Developmental Framework for the Integration of SEL and Career and Workforce Development*

Informed by state experiences and based in research (Mahoney et al., 2020; Newman, 2020; Solberg et al., 2018; Yoder, Atwell, Godek, et al., 2020), the CSI Developmental Framework for the Integration of SEL and Career and Workforce Development offers a foundation for successfully leveraging SEL to support postsecondary success. Consistent with the CASEL framework for SEL (2020), the foundation of the framework is the systemic implementation of SEL for all students and adults with evidence-based SEL programs and practices at the foundation (blue arrow). Grounded by this systemic implementation, the framework recommends that SEL be explicitly and comprehensively integrated into all career and workforce development efforts (green arrow). Moreover, the framework recommends that those integrating SEL into career and workforce development efforts address obstacles that create disparities (e.g., equity barriers), employ strategies that foster access (e.g., equity facilitators), are culturally responsive, and customize student experiences (e.g., existing or emerging systems of Personalized Career and Academic Planning (PCAP)). This framework is informed by the three developmental stages of occupational identity formation (in light green): exposure and awareness; exploration and engagement; and immersion, participation, and preparation (Callahan et al., 2019).

Foundation

Represented by the blue arrow in Figure 1, the CASEL framework of evidence-based SEL serves as the basis for the integration of SEL with career and workforce development (CASEL, 2020).

CASEL advocates for systemic implementation of SEL. While a comprehensive description of systemic implementation can be found in the State Theory of Action and other CASEL resources (Mahoney et al., 2020; Yoder, Martinez-Black, Dermody, et al., 2021), the process includes the alignment of policies, resources, and actions across the contexts of all environments that shape learning and development (e.g., classrooms, schools, districts, communities, and states). Systemic implementation of SEL should create contexts that foster youth voice and agency; establish supportive classroom and school climates and approaches to discipline; enhance adult SEL; and establish authentic family and community partnerships (CASEL, 2020)—conditions associated with effective career and workforce development (Coalition for Career Development Center, 2019; Solberg et al., 2002; 2018). While research on systemic implementation is ongoing, there are many ways to approach this strategy that build upon evidence-based SEL programs and practices.

Evidence-based SEL programs and practices help to develop the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. With these skills, students and adults are prepared to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2020). In addition, evidence-based SEL leads to student outcomes including strong social-emotional-cognitive development, positive behavior and interpersonal relationships, and high academic performance (Taylor et al., 2017)—skills and abilities desired by employers (Lieberman, 2021; Yoder, Atwell, Godek, et al., 2020).

As states in the Career and Workforce Development CoP have noted, SEL is inherently linked to the goals of career and workforce development. Moreover, a recent CASEL study found that SEL prepares students with the social and emotional competencies that directly underpin the skills most requested by employers today and most necessary for adapting to the needs of the workforce of tomorrow (Yoder, Atwell, Godek, et al., 2020). In response, the study's authors called for a "developmental continuum of skills from birth through adulthood organized around a common framework of competencies, such as the CASEL framework" (Yoder, Atwell, Godek, et al., 2020).

By supporting the integration of SEL with existing career and workforce development efforts, the framework can help states more deeply support students' unique path in life and work.

Integration

Represented by the green arrow in Figure 1, SEL can be integrated into all career and workforce development efforts. This integration can happen through (1) the organization of explicit SEL instruction during career and workforce development activities and (2) the utilization of career and workforce experiences as opportunities for practicing emerging social and emotional skills. Specific recommendations for the methods of this integration are being co-constructed with states in the SEL and Career and Workforce Development CoP.

To successfully integrate SEL into career and workforce development efforts, a comprehensive picture of these efforts in Pre-K-12 educational environments must be established (Newman, 2020; Results for America, 2019). These efforts vary widely and increase in complexity as youths' competencies and interests expand. Influenced by occupational identity theory (Callahan et al., 2019), the CSI Developmental Framework for Integration of SEL and Career and Workforce Development organizes these efforts in three developmental categories of (represented by the light green boxes in Figure 1):

- "Exposure and awareness" activities beginning in preschool and elementary school
- "Exploration and engagement" activities beginning in middle school
- "Immersion, participation, and preparation" beginning in high school

Examples of some of these efforts can be found in Table 1. Akin to any developmental model, it is important to remember that growth is not always linear. As children learn about different careers and identify their own strengths, they can move back and forth through these stages and activities.

Table 1:

Examples of Workforce Development Efforts					
Preschool and Elementary School Exposure and Awareness →		**Middle School** Exploration and Engagement →		**High School** Immersion, Participation, and Preparation	
Career days		Project-based learning		CTE and career development courses (e.g., identifying general SEL skills that are transferable across specific careers and jobs), leading to dual degrees, postsecondary credits, and certifications	
Guest classroom speakers		Community service and service-learning		Work-based learning	Career Pathway programs
Field trips	Exposure through literature	Job shadowing	Mock interviews	Internships	Externships
		Career mentoring		Simulated work-based experiences	Apprenticeships

To advance equity in this framework, those integrating SEL must strive to foster access to and dispel disparities within career and workforce development activities (Butrymowicz, 2021). To do this, structural barriers to equity such as stereotypes, implicit bias, and homophily (i.e., the universal tendency to look for and bond with people who are similar to oneself) should be addressed (Callahan et al., 2019; Jagers et al., 2018). In addition, facilitators of equity, which include strategies like upholding diverse role models, ensuring equal access to career and workforce development efforts, and disaggregating data, should be employed (Yoder, Martinez-Black, Dermody, et al. 2021).

To advance excellence in this framework, those integrating SEL can utilize Personalized Career and Academic Planning (PCAP) to ensure customized integration of SEL into each student's career and workforce development experience (Solberg et al., 2013; 2018). PCAP, which is already required in most states, is a process that results in a document described as an "individualized learning plan" (ILPs) by the federal government (ODEP, 2021). As part of the PCAP process, students work with a trusted adult (e.g., school counselor, teacher, parent, mentor) to develop a plan to explore their own interests and strengths (Solberg et al., 2018). This process requires that students understand a set of career and workforce opportunities (social awareness), determine their own talents and interests (self-awareness), plan for and set goals (self-management), pursue steps to experience career and workforce opportunities (responsible decision-making), and seek help from others and establish relationships with mentors to advance goals (relationship management) (CASEL, 2020; Coalition for Career Development Center, 2021).

As mentioned previously, students will most likely cycle between different stages of this framework as they progress in their career and workforce development. As students grow in their own SEL skills, the PCAP process allows for customization and coordination of planning to ensure continual integration of SEL throughout this process (Solberg et al., 2018). Thus, this framework supports utilizing the PCAP process organizationally and functionally, both to ensure the integration of SEL into all activities across the developmental continuum and to provide students with an opportunity to practice their emerging social and emotional skills.

Conclusion

As the CSI continues to support states in establishing policies that enable districts and schools to systemically implement SEL through evidence-based programs and practices, we welcome the initial development of policies that explicitly and comprehensively integrate SEL into existing career and workforce development efforts. As stated in the introduction to this brief, the specifics of these integration strategies are being co-constructed through our partnership with states.

While some early studies suggest the promise of these integrated efforts for students (e.g., Caspary & Warner, 2020), future research will be needed to assess the effectiveness of the integration of SEL with career and workforce development efforts. To contribute to this framework, and in the spirit of continuous improvement, states should identify (1) their specific strategies of integration, (2) their methods of collecting and analyzing process data (e.g., integration of SEL into PCAP process and career and workforce development enrollment), and (3) their outcomes data (e.g., SEL competencies and postsecondary outcomes) for disaggregated groups to ensure that desired effects are being achieved for all students (Butrymowicz, 2021; Yoder, Martinez-Black, Dermody, et al., 2021). In coming months, CASEL will release a series of reports as well as tools and resources to elaborate this framework and to support implementation and continuous improvement of it in all 50 states.

Systemically integrating SEL and career and workforce development is a critical strategy for promoting postsecondary success for all students. Guided by state insights, CASEL looks forward to expanding upon this developmental framework to include multiple strategies that leverage SEL in support of future readiness, including civic engagement, so that all students are equipped to succeed in school, life, and work.

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CASEL is a leading nonpartisan nonprofit in the field of social and emotional learning, with a mission to help make evidence-based SEL an integral part of education, preschool to high school. Today, CASEL collaborates with leading experts and districts, schools, and states nationwide to drive research, guide practice, and inform policy. For more information, visit casel.org

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Scott Solberg and Robin Kroyer-Kubicek

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Matthew Atwell and John Bridgeland

State Partners

- **Delaware Department of Education**
  Teri B. Lawler and Lisa Stoner-Torbet
- **Kansas State Department of Education**
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