THE MISSING PIECE

A REPORT FOR CASEL

A National Teacher Survey on How Social and Emotional Learning Can Empower Children and Transform Schools

**By Civic Enterprises
with Peter D. Hart Research Associates**

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AN OPEN LETTER TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

by Jennifer Buffett and Timothy Shriver

In too many classrooms and schools across America, children are missing a critical piece of their education. Year after year, and test after test, students and their teachers focus on the cognitive elements of education, while other life skills are often absent from the in-school experience. Reading and writing are intentionally taught, but not always resilience and responsibility. Arithmetic and higher math skills are embedded in school goals, but not necessarily persistence and grit. In some classrooms, an "either/or" dynamic has been established where core knowledge is taught, but not the skills to work cooperatively with others, resolve conflicts, and persevere. From the schoolhouse to State House, "academic skills" have been emphasized, tested, and reported upon, but another essential aspect of a child's education — social and emotional learning (SEL) — has been underemphasized or altogether forgotten — with serious consequences to children, schools, and communities. The divisions that have polarized the debate, and kept SEL on the periphery of education reform, must end to ensure students cultivate the full suite of skills they need to be successful in school, work, and life.

The research overwhelmingly shows the linkages among SEL, student outcomes, and school performance. Now, for the first time, we have strong evidence that those on the front lines of American education — our nation's teachers — embrace SEL in their classrooms, for *all* students, as well as endorse a more systemic approach to the use of SEL. Many teachers have been taking this approach organically, and many understand that SEL promotes young people's academic success, engagement, good behavior, cooperation with others, problem-solving abilities, health, and well being, while also preventing a variety of problems such as truancy, alcohol and drug use, bullying, and violence. In recent years, we have seen many promising signs of progress. Schools and districts are increasingly prioritizing SEL, including through the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning's Collaborating Districts Initiative. Some states, such as Illinois and Kansas, have implemented free-standing social and emotional student learning standards, while others have emphasized the teaching of social and emotional skills across academic subject areas.

Although we have powerful evidence that SEL is gaining momentum across the country, we have more to do. We have seen the country address, only in fits and starts, various aspects of SEL, such as school climate, character education, or bullying prevention. Although valuable, too often these programs are ad hoc or add-ons in schools, in response to a tragic event or because of someone's passion for the issue. Rather than this reactionary approach, we can take specific and thoughtful steps to help teachers do the work they themselves have identified as important — to cultivate their students' social and emotional competencies. If we chose to act, together we can help teachers become even better teachers and students reach their fullest potential.

SEL should be embedded throughout the curriculum, pedagogy, and the culture of a school and emphasized in district and state educational goals. We must support teachers in their good work to cultivate the whole child by making sensible policies, promoting proven practices, and providing tools and resources to boost this critical piece of education. In schools across America, SEL should become an integrated piece of the prekindergarten through twelfth grade education experience, considered as essential to education as reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Students growing up today face a more complex, economically challenging, and globally connected world. America has always given priority to unleashing the talents of its citizens to help our communities, country, and world. It is time for our country to move past false choices and ensure SEL is a core aspect of every child's education. By doing so, we can support teachers in their critical work that helps children thrive not just as students, but also as leaders, dreamers, entrepreneurs, and citizens.

Jennifer Buffett, CASEL Board of Directors
NoVo Foundation, President and Co-Chair

Timothy Shriver, CASEL Board of Directors, Chair
Special Olympics, Chairman and CEO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The central message of this report is that teachers across America understand that social and emotional learning (SEL) is critical to student success in school, work, and life. Social and emotional learning involves the processes of developing competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Educators know these skills are teachable; want schools to give far more priority to integrating such development into the curriculum, instruction, and school culture; and believe state student learning standards should reflect this priority. Teachers also want such development to be available for *all* students.

These and other findings are the result of a nationally representative survey of prekindergarten through twelfth grade teachers to assess the role and value of social and emotional learning in America's schools. The voices of teachers on SEL are more important than ever, when expectations for classroom effectiveness are higher, the U.S. educational advantage worldwide is slipping, and a skills gap is threatening American economic growth.

SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey's findings have three major themes: *(1) Teachers Understand, Value, and Endorse Social and Emotional Learning for All Students; (2) Teachers Believe Social and Emotional Learning Helps Students Achieve in School and Life;* and *(3) Teachers Identify Key Accelerators for Social and Emotional Learning.* Throughout this report, we share the perspectives of teachers and what research tells us about various aspects of social and emotional learning, including the importance of both adopting explicit evidence-based SEL strategies and integrating evidence-based SEL approaches. These findings are also supported by discussions with students, case studies of successful schools, and conversations with thought leaders. As a result of these insights, the *Paths Forward* section of the report offers recommendations on how to advance the strategic and systemic use of SEL in schools to promote student success as learners, workers, and citizens.

(1) Teachers Understand, Value, and Endorse Social and Emotional Learning for All Students

Teachers recognize the benefit and need to incorporate SEL into the student learning experience — for all students, from all backgrounds. Furthermore, teachers have a clear understanding of what SEL is and they believe it is teachable.

Teachers Understand, Value, and Endorse SEL

Teachers define SEL as: "the ability to interact or get along with others;" "teamwork or cooperative learning;" "life skills or preparing for the real world;" and "self-control or managing one's behaviors." **When the survey then**

DEFINING OUR TERMS: WHAT IS SEL?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the processes through which adults and children develop social and emotional competencies in five areas:

- ⊙ Self-awareness, like knowing your strengths and limitations
- ⊙ Self-management, like being able to stay in control and persevere through challenges
- ⊙ Social awareness, like understanding and empathizing with others
- ⊙ Relationship skills, like being able to work in teams and resolve conflicts
- ⊙ Responsible decision-making, like making ethical and safe choices

(For more information, see page 16.)

offers the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)'s definition of SEL (see sidebar), nearly all teachers (93 percent) believe SEL is very or fairly important for the in-school student experience.

Teachers Endorse SEL for All Students

Teacher endorsement of SEL holds true across education levels and school types. Nearly all teachers (95 percent) believe social and emotional skills are teachable and report that SEL will benefit students from all backgrounds, rich or poor (97 percent). Research shows that among students from grades five through twelve, positive emotions such as hope, well-being, and engagement account for 31 percent of the variance in student's academic success (hope is 13 percent, engagement 10 percent, and well-being 8 percent).[1]

- Only a small minority believe it is definitely true that SEL should not be taught in schools (19 percent) or think it should only be taught in high-poverty schools (18 percent definitely/probably true).

Teachers Report SEL Should Be Given Greater Emphasis in Schools

Nearly all teachers (88 percent) report SEL occurs in their schools on some level, although **less than half (44 percent) of teachers say social and emotional skills are being taught on a schoolwide, programmatic basis.** Research suggests that a strong, evidence-based SEL program can help reduce student absenteeism and improve student interest — both strong indicators of a student being on track to graduate.[2]

Teachers See the Importance and Benefits of SEL

Research finds that SEL programs are frequently associated with positive student outcomes such as an increase in pro-social behaviors and improved academic performance.[3] **More than three-quarters of the teachers believe a larger focus on SEL will be a major benefit to students because of the positive effect on workforce readiness (87 percent), school attendance and graduation (80 percent), life success (87 percent), college preparation (78 percent), and academic success (75 percent).**

(2) Teachers Believe Social and Emotional Learning Helps Students Achieve in School, Work, and Life

SEL ADDRESSES THE NATIONAL CHALLENGE THAT AMERICA'S EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGE IS SLIPPING

Recent international findings illustrate that America's advantage of a highly educated labor force is shrinking as more countries reach and surpass America's education levels. This, however, is a solvable problem, and SEL is a key part of the solution. Research shows that students receiving high-quality

SEL demonstrate better academic performance, motivation to learn, school behavior, and attendance — and teachers agree. For example, studies find that engaging young children living in poverty in high-quality preschool programs that incorporate SEL themes positively contributes to their school success, social development, crime prevention, and economic performance.

SEL Boosts Academic Performance

A majority of teachers report that SEL can help move the needle on key academic factors. **Eight in ten teachers think SEL will have a major benefit on students' ability to stay on track and graduate and will increase standardized test scores and overall academic performance (77 percent). Three-quarters (75 percent) believe SEL will improve student academic achievement.** Research supports teachers' views in this regard. A 2011 meta-analysis found that students who receive SEL instruction have academic achievement scores an average of 11 percentile points higher than students who did not participate in SEL programs.[4]

- Schools where SEL is taught schoolwide are more likely to report their school is successful at developing key content knowledge (85 percent) compared to schools where SEL is ad hoc (72 percent) or not happening at all (63 percent).

SEL Increases Student Interest in Learning

Nearly seven in ten teachers (69 percent) report student lack of interest as at least somewhat of a problem in schools and among these teachers who see students' lack of interest as at least somewhat of a problem, three-quarters (73 percent) report SEL is very important. **Nearly eight in ten of all teachers (77 percent) say SEL will improve academic performance.** Research corroborates teachers' views: A recent meta-analysis found that students who received explicit SEL skills instruction with evidence-based SEL programs demonstrated improved attitudes and behaviors, including a greater motivation to learn, improved relationships with peers, and a deeper connection to their school.[5]

- **A correlation was found between lack of student interest and schools with less of a schoolwide emphasis on SEL.** Only 61 percent of teachers who report SEL is implemented on a programmatic basis schoolwide also report lack of interest in learning as a problem, compared to 74 percent of teachers in schools where SEL is only taught by some teachers and 77 percent of teachers in schools where SEL is not taught.

SEL Improves Student Behavior

More than half (57 percent) of teachers believe poor student behavior is at least somewhat of a problem. Majorities

of these teachers believe SEL is a solution. **Of the teachers who list poor student behavior as at least somewhat of a problem, three in four (78 percent) say SEL is very important and 79 percent think it will improve student performance.** Students in SEL programs enjoy, on average, a 9–10 percentage point improvement in positive attitude, addressing conduct problems and reducing emotional distress, compared to students not participating in SEL programs.[6]

- **Poor student behavior is a bigger problem in schools with limited focus on SEL.** Teachers who work in schools that they report place too little emphasis on SEL are more likely to say that poor student behavior is at least somewhat of a problem compared to teachers at schools that place the right amount or more emphasis (68 versus 53 percent).

SEL Prevents and Reduces Bullying

Nearly half of teachers (42 percent) list bullying as at least somewhat of a problem, and three in four of these teachers (75 percent) think SEL is very important. Research supports this finding. Various SEL programs have been found to decrease by half the annual number of student fights, decrease violent behaviors by 19 percentage points, and reduce classroom hostility.[7]

- **There is a correlation between higher rates of bullying and schools with limited SEL focus.** More than half of teachers (54 percent) who say there is too little emphasis on SEL also say bullying is at least somewhat of a problem, compared to only 37 percent of teachers in schools with the right amount of emphasis on SEL. On the other hand, only 26 percent of teachers in schools successful

at developing SEL say bullying is a problem.

SEL Improves School Climate

The survey finds that of the teachers who view negative school climate as a problem, 80 percent view SEL as a solution. Teachers in schools that report successful SEL programs are half as likely to say their school has a negative school climate compared to teachers in schools without successful SEL programs (21 percent versus 44 percent). Fifteen years of school reform research supports teachers' opinions on SEL and school climate. Studies identified five essential supports for effective school change — one of which is a learning climate that is safe, welcoming, stimulating, and nurturing to all students. In a recent small sample study, 25 percent of the studied SEL programs were directed at making a change in school culture and climate.[8]

- **Teachers in schools where social and emotional skills are not taught are nearly twice as likely to report school climate as a problem as teachers in schools where it is taught on a systemic basis (43 versus 28 percent).**

SEL ADDRESSES THE NATIONAL CHALLENGE THAT MANY GRADUATES DO NOT HAVE THE SKILLS TO BE SUCCESSFUL

Across multiple measures of education, the American advantage of a highly educated labor force is quickly eroding and America has a skills gap. These trends start early in the educational pipeline and persist. For example, college attainment rates in the U.S. are growing at a below-average rate compared to other peer nations, and there are approximately three million jobs for which the U.S. is not training qualified workers.[9] Only 78.2 percent of American students graduate from high school on time,[10] and fewer than 40 percent of 25–34-year-

olds have some postsecondary degree.[11] Most jobs today and in the future require not only a high school diploma, but also some college.[12] SEL is part of the solution to address these challenges — and teachers agree.

Teachers Believe Social and Emotional Skills Will Help Prepare Students for the Real World

Research supports this finding. On average, students participating in SEL programs have better social skills than 76 percent of comparison-group students and have an average 23 percentage point gain in social-emotional skills relative to students not participating in SEL programs.[13]

- **A majority of teachers believe SEL will be a major benefit in preparing students for the workforce (87 percent). Nearly eight in ten teachers believe a larger focus on SEL will have**

a major benefit on students' ability to stay on track to graduate (80 percent), prepare for college (78 percent), and become good citizens (87 percent).

- A majority of teachers (86 percent) believe teaching skills to apply to real-world situations should have a great deal of emphasis in schools. When surveyed, more than 80 percent of dropouts said their chances of staying in school would have increased if classes were more interesting and provided opportunities for real-world learning.[14]

(3) Teachers Identify Key Accelerators for Social and Emotional Learning

SEL provides an opportunity for a powerful, student-centric approach to education that puts the social and emotional development of the child at the heart of every classroom, school, and district nationwide. SEL helps teachers become more effective by fostering their own social and emotional development and supporting a caring and challenging classroom climate. SEL programs are gaining in popularity and are increasingly being integrated into school curricula. In the survey, teachers identified key means to accelerate the use of SEL in classrooms, schools, and communities.

Schoolwide Programming Could Support Teacher Interest in SEL Implementation

Teachers report that while SEL is occurring organically, there is a disconnection between the demand for SEL that teachers report and schoolwide programming available to students. SEL programming decreases as students advance through the grades: only 28 percent of high school teachers say it is occurring schoolwide, compared to

43 percent of middle school teachers and 49 percent of prekindergarten and elementary school teachers. Only 39 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools report schoolwide SEL programming compared to 53 percent of teachers in low-poverty (where less than 30 percent of the student body are on free or reduced-price lunch).

- **A majority of teachers (81 percent) rank time as the biggest challenge to implementing SEL, although research shows SEL can support increased time on task.** Schoolwide initiatives may support teachers in their interest in implementing SEL, as resources could be shared and lessons reinforced.

Embed SEL in Student Learning Standards

Two in three teachers (62 percent) think the development of social and emotional skills should be explicitly stated in their state education standards. Research suggests that student learning standards may increase the likelihood that students will receive better instruction in SEL, experience improved school connectedness, and become better learners.[15]

- This sentiment is shared by teachers across grade levels and income levels of their students: **More than half of teachers in prekindergarten and elementary school (65 percent), middle school (64 percent), and high school (55 percent) want SEL in their state standards. Furthermore, more than half of teachers in high-poverty (68 percent) and low-poverty (59 percent) schools want SEL in their state standards.**

Improve and Increase Professional Development for SEL

The survey finds that SEL training is lacking in most schools. Four in five

teachers (82 percent) report interest in receiving further training on SEL, with 61 percent "fairly" or "very" interested. Only half (55 percent) of teachers receive some form of SEL training, and of that 23 percent is in-service. Preschool and elementary school teachers are the most likely to receive SEL training (60 percent) while high school teachers are the least likely (47 percent). Professional development to support teacher knowledge, effective pedagogy, and practices enhances effective SEL implementation.[16] Research also shows that SEL programming is more effective when evidence-based programs are adopted and implemented with quality.[17]

Engage Parents and Families

Teachers surveyed report that "students not learning social and emotional skills at home" was among the top reasons to teach SEL in school, and therefore a potential area for growth. **Eight in ten teachers (81 percent) say a lack of skills reinforcement at home is a big challenge for their school trying to implement SEL, and more than half of teachers (66 percent) list it as the biggest challenge. A similar majority (80 percent) who view SEL as very important and think it definitely improves student academic performance (80 percent) say lack of reinforcement at home is a big challenge.** Research finds that children whose parents are more involved in their education, regardless of their family income or background, are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, enroll in higher-level classes, attend school and pass their classes, develop better social skills, graduate from high school, attend college, find productive work, and become more caring individuals and productive citizens.[18]

PATHS FORWARD

As a nation, we have the opportunity to change the lives of millions of American youth with the use of a very powerful strategy: social and emotional learning. SEL provides students with the fundamental skills to achieve in school and succeed in life. Research consistently shows the benefits of SEL, and in many schools teachers are incorporating transformative strategies into their curricula. We now have powerful evidence that teachers across the country endorse and advocate for an increased emphasis on these key tools. We also have models of effective policies and practices that could be replicated across the country, to better support teachers in this important work.

Although SEL is starting to be incorporated in federal policies and initiatives, such as the Race to the Top District requests for proposals and the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2013, it has not been sufficiently prioritized. Federal, state, and local education policy is not yet aligned with the rich insights of the SEL field, and there is a gap in the public's understanding of what SEL means; why it is important for education and life; and what parents, citizens, and young people can do to become effective SEL advocates and role models. In order to maximize its benefits, key polices and strategies must be pursued that promote, strengthen, and sustain social and emotional learning initiatives across the country. The following recommendations were guided by the opinions of more than 600 teachers in the nationally representative survey and informed by a variety of leading social and emotional learning organizations and education-focused research groups.[19]

Promote Social and Emotional Learning in Classrooms, Schools, and Communities

Link SEL to Schoolwide Activities and Other School Services

Teachers can incorporate social and emotional skills into all school topics across all grades. For example, they can use goal-setting instructions and focus on problem-solving strategies and the decision-making process. Across the school, educators can stress the importance of access and opportunities to learn and practice SEL in the classroom as well as at home and in the community.

Conduct Resource and Needs Assessments in Schools

For SEL to be a success systemically, the school and the community must determine the resources, needs, and readiness of the school and identify SEL best practices and measures that fit their school. This can be accomplished through resource and needs assessments that build on evidence-based SEL

programming that is already being implemented and appropriately addresses the needs identified by students, parents, and school staff.

Ensure Effective Coordination with Out-of-School Partners

Family involvement facilitates a child's academic, social, and emotional learning and functioning. A successful school-family partnership (SFP) must be based on the idea that all families can contribute to a child's learning and development, and parents as well as teachers share the responsibility. Likewise, community-school partnerships can help to better facilitate a child's progress through school. To facilitate the creation of student-family-community partnerships, schools must create an SEL or SFP coordinator to serve as a liaison with families and community partners. Teachers should also share SEL strategies, tools, and resources with parents to help with at-home reinforcement.

Strengthen Social and Emotional Learning by Investing in Educators

Provide and Fund Integrated Professional Development to Educators

Educators should be provided high-quality professional development on teaching social and emotional skills during both pre-service and in-service (professional development) training. Professional development for teachers, principals, and professional and paraprofessional staff should focus on teaching explicit core social and emotional skills, embedding SEL in regular instruction, and creating opportunities for students to apply social and emotional skills throughout the day.

Tie SEL to Classroom, School, and District Goals

School, district, and state education leaders should work to align systems of reporting and accountability to clearly defined goals. Modifying report cards to reflect SEL goals and focusing on data collection and review to create tailored and adjustable SEL action plans can accomplish this. District support and leadership for SEL is critical and will determine the extent to which teachers and other school leaders can plan and proceed.

Sustain Social and Emotional Learning through High-Impact Levers

Create State Student Learning Standards and Connect with Common Core State Standards

Standards can provide clear expectations of what students should know and be able to do. State legislators should connect social and emotional development in existing state education standards and/or create stand-alone prekindergarten through twelfth grade social and emotional standards. Connecting social and emotional standards to common core standards and assessments will further incentivize schools, districts, and states to incorporate SEL into their education policies and practices.

Ensure Sustainable Funding

Public and philanthropic investments, including Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), should identify SEL professional development and program implementation as funding priorities and provide funding preferences in competitive grants to reward states, districts, and schools with a clear SEL plan.

Support Federal Policies that Promote SEL

The Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2013 will expand the availability of programs that teach students skills such as problem-solving, conflict resolution, responsible decision-making, relationship building, goal-setting, and self-discipline. This bipartisan model legislation supporting students' development through academic, social, and emotional learning has been introduced in Congress and should be passed, or its language incorporated into other key pieces of legislation, like ESEA.[20]

Advance a Robust Research Agenda

A robust pool of research is required that practitioners and policymakers alike can draw from and learn. The Institute of Education Sciences can prioritize research on districtwide, schoolwide, and classroom programs to enhance academic, social, and emotional learning and its effects on key issues, such as school climate, bullying, student well-being, and academic performance. Research on the impact of schoolwide SEL programming versus classroom programming and explicit SEL skills instruction versus intentional pedagogical integration would fill important research gaps. Furthermore, states or districts with comprehensive SEL student learning standards should be studied. It is also critical to develop SEL assessment tools that educators can use to measure students' social and emotional competence.

The lack of urgency around SEL implementation in schools threatens the future success of America's children. SEL is a proven strategy that is endorsed by teachers across the country. Yet too few schools and far fewer school systems are adopting explicit evidence-based SEL strategies or integrating evidence-based SEL approaches — both of which are needed. SEL has been underutilized for too long. Our lack of action inhibits students across the country from fully realizing their potential as knowledgeable, responsible, caring, and contributing individuals. The time has passed to debate whether schools should make SEL a central focus. Now we must act to ensure our students and teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in school, work, and life.

INTRODUCTION

America risks a generation of talent, needlessly lost. Our nation aspires to live up to its dream of equal opportunity for all as we educate our children to be knowledgeable, responsible, caring, and contributing individuals. We want them to be poised for a lifetime of opportunity and success in a rapidly changing economy and world.

But today in America, more than one million school-aged children do not graduate from high school with their peers,[21] with huge consequences to them, society, and our economy.[22] Even among high school graduates, too few enroll in and complete college.[23] Ironically, America has a widening skills gap and 3.6 million available jobs right at a time of high unemployment,[24] particularly among youth. Tragically, these educational trends result in nearly seven million youth (ages 16–24) disconnecting from school or work, leaving many of them unable to support themselves, raise families, and give back to their communities.[25] Such disconnection also costs taxpayers $93 billion per year and $1.6 trillion over the lifetimes of these youth.[26]

This does not have to be America's story. In communities across the United States, students are facing ever-higher standards in schools, more complex environments with the breakdown of families and neighborhoods, and an economy that requires a broader range of skills. Many of the skills that enable students to navigate successfully — such as self-awareness and -management, grit and determination, empathy and conflict resolution, discipline and industriousness, and application of knowledge and skills to real-world situations — are not being systemically integrated into American schools. These are the very life skills and experiences that dropouts themselves say would have kept them in school and on track,[27] as social and emotional learning (SEL) provides students with the fundamental skills to achieve in school and succeed in life. These are also the skills that teach all of us how to handle our relationships, our careers, and ourselves in an effective and fulfilling manner, enabling success not just in school, but in work and civic life.

There is powerful evidence that SEL, if scaled, could dramatically improve student achievement in schools and a lifetime of outcomes for children that would strengthen education, the economy, and our communities. (See page 16 for more information on the definition of SEL.)

A robust body of research shows that adopting explicit evidence-based SEL strategies and integrating evidence-based SEL instructional approaches are linked to a variety of positive outcomes for children, ranging from improved attitudes and behaviors to better academic performance. A number of studies have shown that students who receive SEL have achievement scores an average of 11 percentile points higher than students who do not.[28] There are also powerful examples of schools, districts, and states intentionally prioritizing SEL in programs and policies, including the eight school districts engaging in the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)'s Collaborating District Initiative.[29] This report features case studies on Austin, TX; Cleveland, OH; Montgomery County, MD; and DuPage County, IL, as well as the Illinois State Standards, as examples of these successes and as a challenge that others can lead in this important work, too.

In addition to this compelling evidence, now — for the first time ever — we have evidence that teachers across the nation — those closest to the development of children — readily endorse this approach. In November and December 2012, more than 600 educators, from prekindergarten, elementary, middle, and high schools across the country, demonstrated that they have a common vision for schools, which

DEFINING OUR TERMS: WHAT IS SEL?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the processes through which adults and children develop social and emotional competencies in five areas:

- ◉ Self-awareness, like knowing your strengths and limitations

- ◉ Self-management, like being able to stay in control and persevere through challenges

- ◉ Social awareness, like understanding and empathizing with others

- ◉ Relationship skills, like being able to work in teams and resolve conflicts

- ◉ Responsible decision-making, like making ethical and safe choices

(For more information, see page 16.)

embraces the importance and efficacy of fostering SEL in schools. This nationally representative sample of teachers endorse a transformative strategy to make social and emotional development an integral part of *every child's* educational experience — so that all children develop the competencies they need to succeed in school and in life. By making SEL central to every child's education, teachers — along with school counselors, principals, administrators, families, and community partners — can help youth develop the self-awareness and self-management they need to be successful, the compassion and attitudes they need to care about others, and the skills they need to be productive workers and responsible citizens. The health and vitality of our communities, the effectiveness of our schools, and the demands of our economy require that we develop these essential life skills in our nation's children.

We are at a critical juncture in American education. Now, more than ever, we know what students need to succeed, but in schools across the country, we are often failing to provide these critical resources.

SEL is a key component of a child's growth into a productive worker and citizen — and has been shown to help children be better students and citizens at the prekindergarten, elementary, middle and high school levels; at urban, suburban and rural schools;[30] and with students from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.[31] Despite this evidence, SEL is often not taught or intentionally integrated into the curriculum, is ad hoc, or is absent entirely.

For too long, SEL has been the missing piece in the educational puzzle. As a result, many students are developing only some of the skills they need to succeed. In order to learn more about the potential demand for SEL in schools and what prevents SEL from reaching more of America's students, CASEL, in partnership with Civic Enterprises and Peter D. Hart Research Associates, conducted qualitative and quantitative research in fall 2012. As a result, we now know that American teachers strongly share the belief that the development of social and emotional skills is a critical means of ensuring all students graduate high school ready for college, career, and life.

This report, *The Missing Piece,* outlines findings from a national survey of teachers along three major themes: *(1) Teachers Understand, Value, and Endorse Social and Emotional Learning for All Students,* which shares the views of teachers on the benefits and use of SEL in schools; *(2) Teachers Believe Social and Emotional Learning Helps Students Achieve in School and Life,* which identifies the key goals SEL advances and the challenges SEL helps to overcome; and *(3) Teachers Identify Key Accelerators for Social and Emotional Learning,* which shares teacher-identified levers to advance SEL in schools. Then, *Paths Forward* provides recommendations for how communities, schools, districts, states, and the nation can advance the strategic and systemic use of SEL in schools to promote student success as scholars and citizens. *Appendix 1* provides additional information on the survey methodology. *Appendix 2* provides additional information on CASEL, as well as its resources for supporting SEL in families, schools, and districts.

SURVEY OVERVIEW

Children have nearly limitless potential — and their teachers are an extremely important in-school factor linked to their success.[32] Teachers teach their students the knowledge and skills required for academic achievement. They plan lessons, comment on homework, grade tests, and facilitate in-school learning environments. In addition to these core duties, teachers also have the potential to inspire their students, to teach them how to dream, thrive, and succeed — even (or especially) after failure. Teachers help students navigate their way through schools and school relationships. They encourage them to try a math problem a second time; to problem solve with their peers; and to build relationships on the schoolyard, the neighborhood block, and the front stoop. Later, these same children will grow to be adults, applying these lessons learned to growing and succeeding in their careers, families, and communities.

Over the past year, in conversations with teachers and students, principals and policymakers, we learned that these aspects of learning — the social and emotional — are key determinants in students' ability to grow as students as well as citizens. We learned that educators identify SEL as a key tool, although it is often described in varied terms. In some districts we found that SEL implementation began with the teachers and was driven by their steadfast convictions that positive SEL is inseparable from student achievement in and out of school. In others, it was determined to be a priority by principals or superintendents, with strong family support.

In the words of Bob Wise, President of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia, "Some students finish high school. Some don't. When you look back in the rearview mirror, you can almost always see SEL as a determining factor of their success." Through the process of developing this report, we learned that in many cases, teachers — along with school counselors, principals, administrators, families, and community partners — are supporting social and emotional skill development in their classrooms, schools, and communities. These educators also identified SEL as the critical piece that was missing in helping their students develop as scholars and citizens.

> "Too often, SEL is episodic. Some students finish high schools. Some don't. When you look back in the rearview mirror, you can almost always see SEL as a determining factor of their success."
>
> — Bob Wise, President of the Alliance for Excellent Education and Governor of West Virginia (2001–05)

TEACHERS UNDERSTAND, VALUE, AND ENDORSE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOR ALL STUDENTS

Teachers recognize the benefit and need to incorporate social and emotional learning (SEL) into the student learning experience — for all students, from all backgrounds. Furthermore, teachers have a clear understanding of what SEL is and they believe it is in fact teachable. In discussions with teachers and administrators across the country, they explained that SEL transformed classrooms, schools, and districts by creating environments where both students and teachers wanted to come to school, build relationships, and learn together.

Teachers Endorse SEL for All Students

SEL is the process by which children develop intrapersonal *and* interpersonal skills to succeed in all aspects of life.[36] The literature explains there is a specific suite of skills, attitudes, attributes, and dispositions that help children make positive decisions related to academics, personal decisions, and scenarios related to work.[37] These skills enable children to navigate challenges they will face over their lives and guide them to successful outcomes that are beneficial to themselves and society at large.[38]

A considerable amount of SEL-related research spans several disciplines, including developmental psychology, neurobiology, sociology, education reform, disengaged youth, and philosophy. CASEL provides a comprehensive and research-based definition of SEL (see sidebar on page 16), yet the field lacks consensus on terminology. For example, "character education,"[39] "21st century skills," "character strength building,"[40] "soft skills," "non-cognitive skills development,"[41] "conscious discipline,"[42] and "psychosocial intervention"[43] are several of the terms associated (and sometimes conflated) with SEL. In a study conducted by KSA-Plus Communications for CASEL, interviewees from the private and public sectors all agreed on the importance of SEL — but used their own varied language to define it.[44]

Our nationally representative sample of teachers confirms this reality — SEL as a concept is understood, although the terminology can vary. The survey also found that teachers' personal

FIGURE 1 **When thinking about the definition of SEL (see page 16)… how important is it for schools to promote development of these social and emotional skills as part of students' in-school experience?**
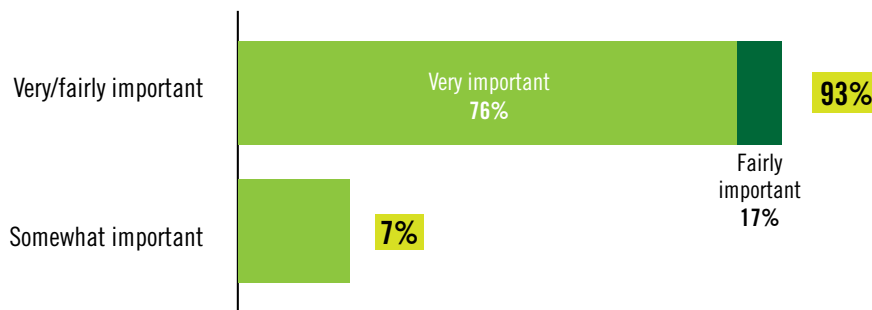
FIGURE 2

When provided with CASEL's definition of SEL, teachers overwhelmingly believe it should be an important part of students' in-school experience.

Teachers see social and emotional skills as most relevant for elementary schools. Still, majorities believe it should be a big priority through high school. They said teaching social and emotional skills should be a big priority at this level:

In preschool
- All teachers **77%**
- Pre-K/Elementary school teachers **79%**
- Middle school teachers **72%**
- High school teachers **73%**

In elementary school
- 77%
- 80%
- 74%
- 71%

In middle school
- 69%
- 74%
- 63%
- 61%

In high school
- 56%
- 63%
- 53%
- 42%
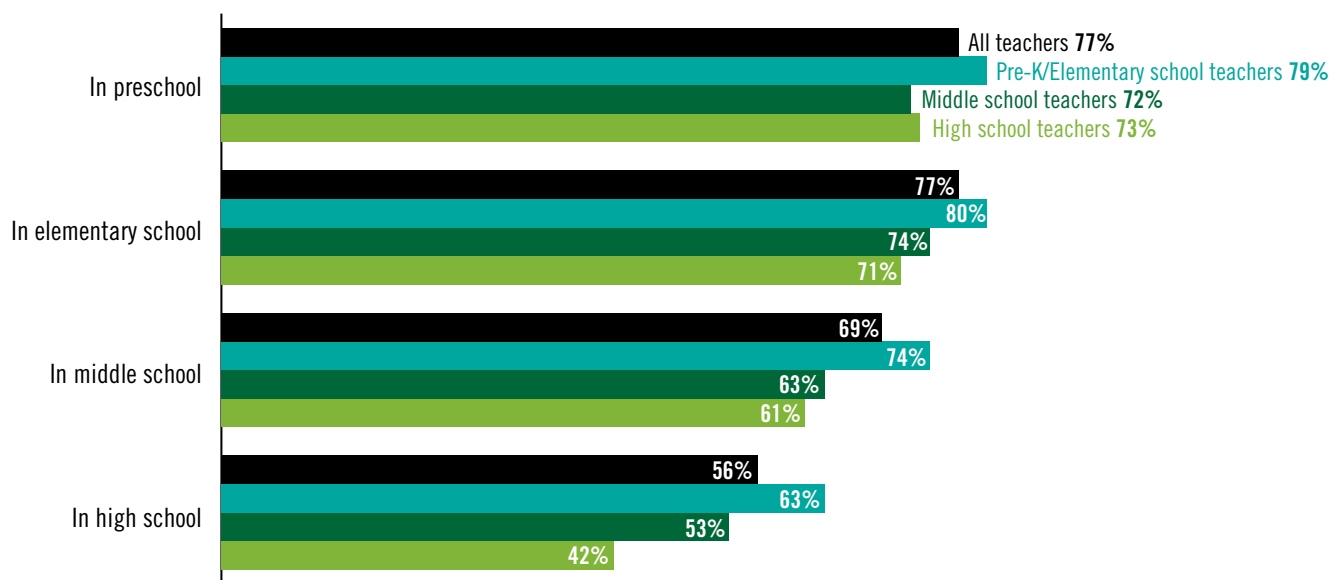
understanding of SEL lines up closely with CASEL's definition (for full definition, see page 16), indicating that teachers endorse this definition. Teachers define SEL as the ability to interact or get along with others, teamwork or cooperative learning, life skills or preparing for the real world, and self-control or managing one's behaviors. Further, when prompted with the CASEL definition, SEL is strongly endorsed. Nearly all teachers (93 percent, including 76 percent who cited

it as very important) believe SEL should be an important part of the in-school experience (Figure 1).

This endorsement of SEL holds true across education levels and school types (Figure 2). Only a minority of teachers (19 percent) thinks SEL should not be taught in schools. A full 95 percent of teachers believe social and emotional skills are teachable (including 97 percent of prekindergarten and elementary school

teachers). A majority of prekindergarten and elementary school teachers (86 percent), middle school teachers (72 percent), high school teachers (58 percent), teachers from schools with high rates of poverty (76 percent), and teachers from schools with low rates of poverty (74 percent) report that SEL is an important part of students' in-school experience. Furthermore, nearly every teacher surveyed (97 percent) say that SEL will benefit students from *all*

A full 95 percent of teachers believe social and emotional skills are teachable (including 97 percent of preschool and elementary school teachers).

WHAT IS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledg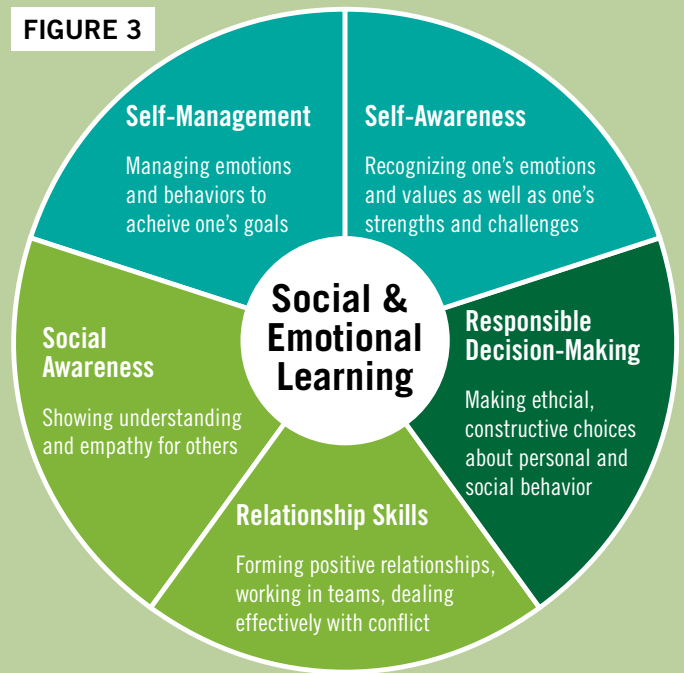e, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.[33] SEL programming is based on the understanding that the best learning emerges in the context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging, and meaningful. Social and emotional skills are critical to being a good student, citizen, and worker; and many different risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying, and dropping out) can be prevented or reduced when multiyear, integrated efforts are used to develop students' social and emotional skills. This is best done through effective classroom instruction; student engagement in positive activities in and out of the classroom; and broad parent and community involvement in program planning, implementation, and evaluation.[34] Effective SEL programming begins in preschool and continues through high school.

CASEL has identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies (Figure 3), which framed the survey development (for additional information on CASEL, please see Appendix 2). The definitions of the five competency clusters for students are:

- **Self-awareness:** The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and having a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

- **Self-management:** The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward personal and academic goals.

- **Social awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures; to understand social and ethical norms for behavior; 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. This

FIGURE 3

Social & Emotional Learning

- **Self-Management** Managing emotions and behaviors to acheive one's goals
- **Self-Awareness** Recognizing one's emotions and values as well as one's strengths and challenges
- **Responsible Decision-Making** Making ethcial, constructive choices about personal and social behavior
- **Relationship Skills** Forming positive relationships, working in teams, dealing effectively with conflict
- **Social Awareness** Showing understanding and empathy for others

includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering 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.

The short-term goals of SEL programs are to (1) promote students' self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship, and responsible decision-making skills; and (2) improve student attitudes and beliefs about self, others, and school. These, in turn, provide a foundation for better adjustment and academic performance as reflected in more positive social behaviors and peer relationships, fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress, and improved grades and test scores (Figure 4).[35]

FIGURE 4
Outcomes Associated with the Five Competencies

SEL Approaches
- Explicit Social and Emotional Skills Instruction
- Integration with Academic Curriculum Areas
- Teacher Instructional Practices

Social and Emotional Skill Acquisition: Five Competence Areas

Improved Attitudes about Self, Others, and Schools

Positive Social Behavior

Fewer Conduct Problems

Less Emotional Distress

Academic Success

FIGURE 5 **Many teachers believe their schools place too little emphasis on developing students' life skills, including their social and emotional skills.**

My school places too little emphasis on this goal

Developing students' ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world situations	32%
Developing students' social and emotional skills	30%
Developing critical thinking and reasoning abilities in students	26%
Developing students' knowledge and skills in key content and subject areas	7%
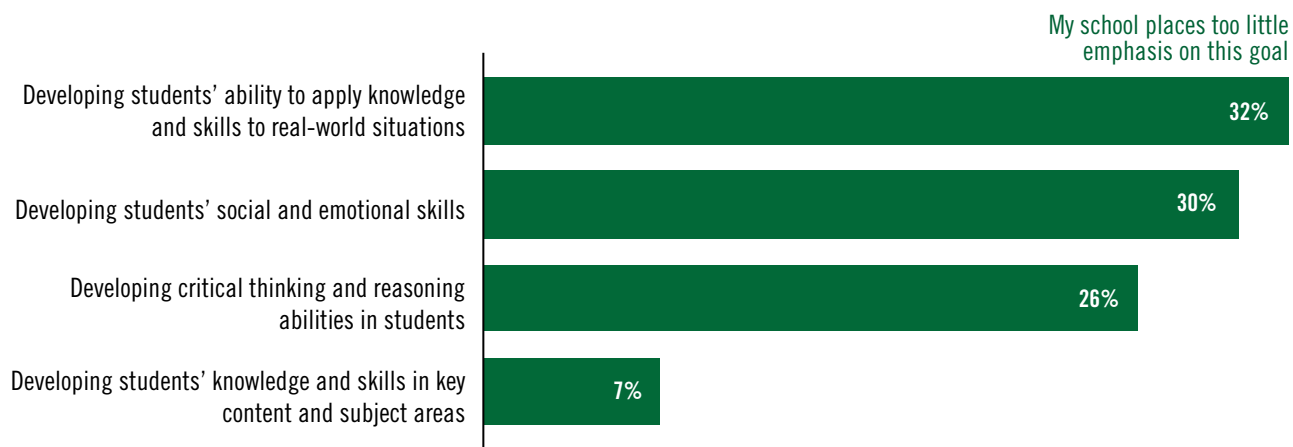
backgrounds, rich or poor. A minority of teachers (18 percent) think it is important to teach social and emotional skills only in high-poverty schools.

Teachers Say SEL Should Be Given Greater Emphasis

The survey finds that nearly nine in ten teachers (88 percent) say SEL occurs in their schools, either on an individual teacher (ad hoc) basis or schoolwide. One-third of teachers (30 percent) report that their schools place too little emphasis on developing social and emotional skills and skills related to these competencies (Figure 5), including developing students'

ability to apply knowledge to real-world situations (32 percent). Teachers are more than four times as likely to say their school places too little emphasis on developing social and emotional skills (30 percent) versus developing students' knowledge and skills in key content and subject areas (7 percent).

Teachers See the Importance and Benefits of SEL

In addition to endorsing SEL as an important component of the school experience, teachers also report many benefits of SEL to students. Randi

Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers, explains, "Teachers enter the profession to provide a well-rounded education and support the whole student, which includes social and emotional skills development. SEL is a critical part of every child's growth, both as students and as contributing members of society." Likewise, research finds that SEL programs are most frequently associated with positive results, increased pro-social behavior, and improved academic performance.[45] One teacher from Philadelphia puts it simply: "[SEL] needs to be taught everywhere."

More than three-quarters of teachers believe a larger focus by schools on SEL will have a major benefit on students in the crucial areas of workforce readiness (87 percent), school attendance and graduation (80 percent), life success (87 percent), college preparation (78 percent), and academic success (75 percent). Teachers also report relational and academic benefits. A majority of teachers (94 percent) say teaching social and emotional skills will probably or definitely improve relationships between teachers and students and reduce bullying (93 percent). More than three-quarters

"Teachers enter the profession to provide a well-rounded education and support the whole student, which includes social and emotional skills development. SEL is a critical part of every child's growth, both as students and as contributing members of society. Teachers have shared with us how important this is — now it's up to all of us to support them in this essential work."
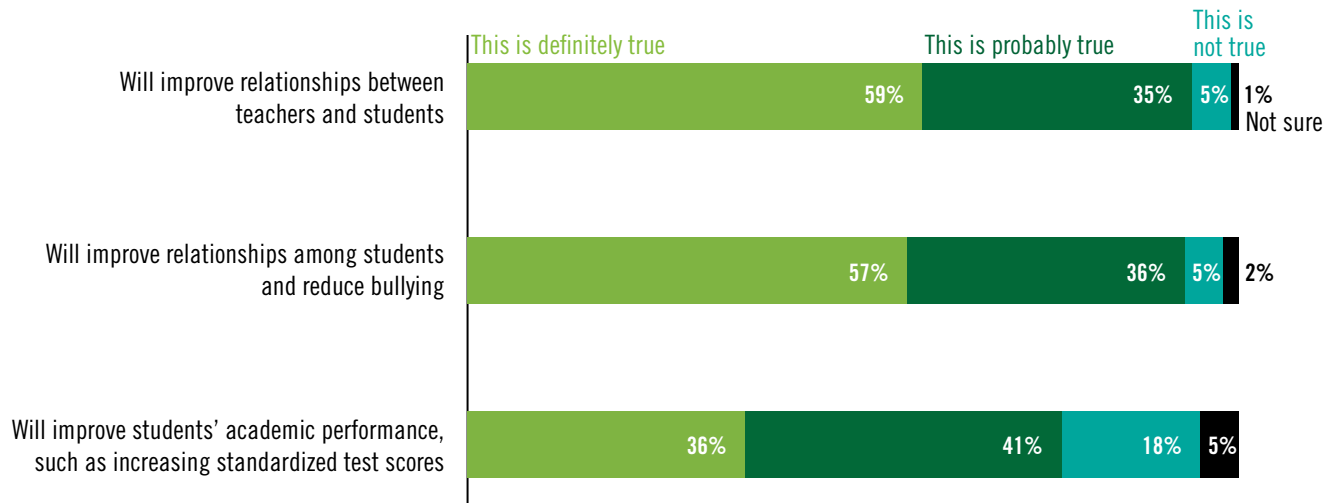
— Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers

FIGURE 6 **The relational benefits to teaching social and emotional skills are readily apparent; academic benefits are seen as likely.**

Teaching social and emotional skills in schools:

This is definitely true | This is probably true | This is not true

Will improve relationships between teachers and students: 59% | 35% | 5% | 1% Not sure

Will improve relationships among students and reduce bullying: 57% | 36% | 5% | 2%

Will improve students' academic performance, such as increasing standardized test scores: 36% | 41% | 18% | 5%

of teachers (77 percent) think social and emotional skills will improve students' academic performance (Figure 6).
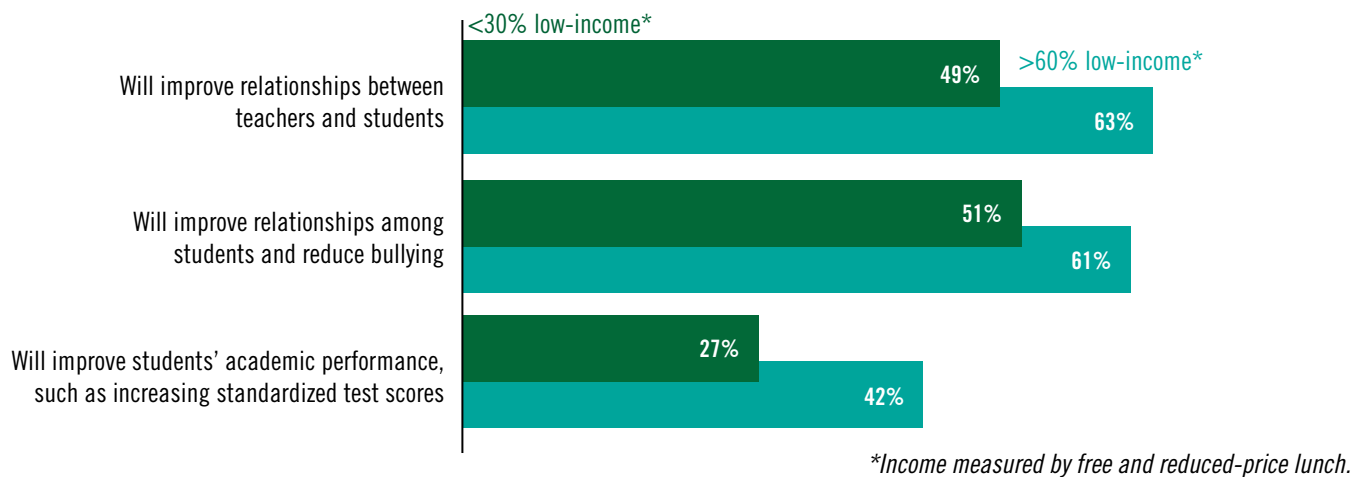
Teachers in high-poverty schools (schools with 60 percent or more students in the free/reduced-price lunch program) are even more likely to endorse SEL than their peers in higher resourced communities (Figure 7). They are more likely to report social and emotional skills will improve student-teacher relationships (63 percent versus 44 percent), reduce bullying (61 percent versus 51 percent), and improve students' academic performance (42 percent versus 27 percent). Furthermore, only 8 percent of teachers believe that social and emotional skills should be taught to only students with social and emotional problems. The research base is beginning to explicitly show the positive effects of SEL for students in low-income communities. For example, students participating in social and emotional intervention programs in high-poverty urban high schools were found to have improved social, behavioral, emotional, and academic adjustment, including higher grade point averages, compared to those students not participating in the program.[46] Some national education organizations that serve these populations are embedding SEL into their programming.[47]

FIGURE 7

Teachers at high-poverty schools are especially convinced of the benefits of social and emotional learning.

Teaching social and emotional skills in schools:

<30% low-income*

>60% low-income*

Will improve relationships between teachers and students	49% / 63%
Will improve relationships among students and reduce bullying	51% / 61%
Will improve students' academic performance, such as increasing standardized test scores	27% / 42%

Income measured by free and reduced-price lunch.

SNAPSHOT
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD: SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES COLLABORATE ON SEL STRATEGIC PLAN

"I know it will be a challenge … but it's important work and we are committed to doing it."[48] This determined sentiment expressed by an administrator in the Montgomery County Public School District (MCPS) has sustained efforts to implement districtwide social and emotional learning. In July 2011, administrators began developing a strategic plan that included efforts to integrate SEL into their schools and academic curricula to improve school climate and academic outcomes. MCPS has made SEL a district priority based on the growing evidence that SEL is necessary, not only for interpersonal relationships and academic achievement but for future success in the workplace.

MCPS serves more than 149,000 students, 33.0 percent White, 26.7 percent Hispanic, 21.3 percent students of color, and 14.3 percent Asian.[49] Although district schools range in size and demographics, MCPS wanted to involve the entire community in developing the SEL components of its strategic plan. In spring 2012, MCPS held a community forum to begin laying the groundwork. More than 250 community leaders attended and shared feedback. The forum included several small-group breakout sessions where MCPS staff, parents, and community members discussed how social and emotional competencies can be promoted in school, in the community, and at home.[50] District administrators believe that community buy-in is crucial to the success of their SEL initiative and have continued to incorporate community participation through their "network teams" in revising its strategic plan. The teams are made up of about 60 individuals

including teachers, psychiatrists, parents, business leaders, and other community members. Teams meet every two weeks to draft the plan. Parent involvement is especially important in these teams as MCPS administrators hope that social and emotional competencies learned in schools will be reinforced at home by students' families. In addition to these efforts, teachers and school administrators have worked hard to imbed SEL in Curriculum 2.0, a Common Core State Standards-aligned curriculum that focuses on developing critical and creative thinking skills, essential academic skills, and skills that prepare students to succeed in college and career.[51] Curriculum 2.0 requires students to work in teams, actively collaborate, and problem solve during lessons.[52]

Montgomery County hopes to have completed its strategic plan framework by June 2013, with Curriculum 2.0 fully implemented in kindergarten through fifth grade in fall 2013.[53] MCPS is on track to meet this goal, although administrators admit that it has not always been easy. Measuring SEL has been a particular challenge, but the district is committed to developing an evaluation program that can accurately track both academic and school climate outcomes. Professional development (PD) has also been a challenge. Administrators want to make sure PD is targeted and specific and helps adults accurately recognize the level of social and emotional competencies in each student. Despite these challenges, MCPS is optimistic and excited to begin implementation. As one educator remarks, "It's tough work but it's the right work."

TEACHERS BELIEVE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING HELPS STUDENTS ACHIEVE IN SCHOOL, WORK, AND LIFE

The research — and the voices of teachers across the country — shows that social and emotional learning (SEL) can help to solve key national challenges related to our education and workforce readiness. SEL can help students in all schools, especially in schools with higher percentages of low-income students. Studies find engaging children in high-quality programs positively contributes to school success, social development, crime prevention, and economic performance.[54] These benefits in turn help schools, families, communities, employers, and our economy.

ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL CHALLENGE
AMERICA'S EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGE IS SLIPPING

Across multiple measures of education, the American advantage of a highly educated labor force is quickly eroding as more countries reach and surpass the qualification levels of American students. These trends start early in the educational pipeline and persist. Among peer nations, the U.S. ranks in the bottom half (28th of 38) in the percentage of students enrolled in early childhood education.[56] American 15-year-olds are average in reading (14th of 34) and below average in mathematics (25th of 34).[57] The U.S. ranks near the bottom in high school completion (22nd of 27), 7 percentage points below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average.[58] The U.S. is also below the OECD average in the rate of students whose parents went to college (29 percent), which is alarming given that level of parental educational attainment is one of the highest indicators of student success.[59] Although the U.S. is above the OECD average in college completion (42 percent completion rate for 25–34-year-olds versus 30 percent), the U.S. has fallen from first to fourteenth in the world in college attainment and is far behind the leader, Korea (with 65 percent).[60] More worrisome, college attainment rates in the U.S. are growing more slowly than the international average.[61] SEL can help address these gaps. For example, according to Eduardo Padron, President of Miami Dade College, "I could not agree more with the importance of embracing social and emotional learning at all levels of education, but particularly in higher education. We have an opportunity to affect not only individual lives but also the quality of life in our communities and our civic conversation."

SEL Can Be a Key Part of the Solution

The education challenge in America is solvable — and SEL is a key tool to address it. One research study shows that among one million students from grades five to twelve, positive emotions such as hope, well-being, and engagement account for 31 percent of the variance in students' academic success (hope is 13 percent, engagement 10 percent, and well-being 8 percent).[62] In a survey of the nation's dropouts, many said they would have stayed on track to graduate if they had been provided social and emotional skills — including building relationships with in-school peers and adults, demonstrating leadership, and sharing their dreams for the future.[63] A recent meta-analysis of more than 200 rigorous studies of SEL in schools indicates that students receiving explicit SEL skills instruction with evidence-

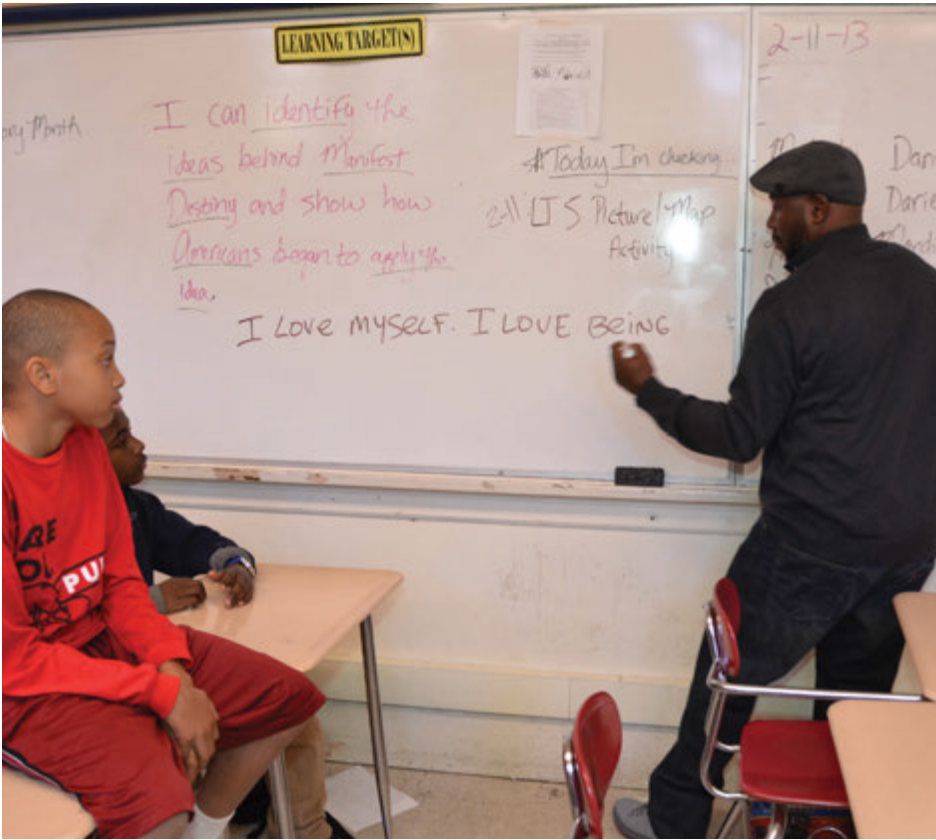> "I could not agree more with the importance of embracing social and emotional learning at all levels of education, but particularly in higher education. We have an opportunity to affect not only individual lives but also the quality of life in our communities and our civic conversation."
>
> — Eduardo Padron, President of Miami Dade College

based SEL programs demonstrated better academic performance (achievement scores an average of 11 percentile points higher than students who did not receive SEL instruction), improved attitudes and behaviors (greater motivation to learn, deeper commitment to school, increased time devoted to schoolwork, better classroom behavior, and improved

SNAPSHOT
THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

SEL is shown to be — and endorsed as — beneficial to children from diverse national, cultural, and linguistic contexts, especially pertinent given changing American demographics.[55] Students agree: SEL has important benefits and schools should place greater emphasis on developing these skills. In-depth interviews with fifteen middle and high school students from diverse backgrounds reveal that students find CASEL's five social and emotional competencies valuable, particularly because of the social and career benefits.

A BETTER IN-SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

The majority of students say that teachers should spend more time helping students develop these skills, as SEL was not a consistent part of their schooling. If schools placed a great emphasis on developing students social and emotional skills — which they want — students would expect to do better academically and the school climate would be more conducive to learning. As one eighth grade girl says, "If students have better social and emotional skills, then they will probably get better grades. They would realize that school is important."

IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

When provided with definitions for CASEL's five social and emotional skills, students easily explained how these skills would help students to get along better with each other — which would in turn support success in school and work. One twelfth grade boy explains, "Having social and emotional skills will prevent a lot of stress-related incidences that happen in workplaces and it will help you enjoy your job. If you get mad at your job, you just don't want to be there and it will get worse every day. It would help you focus on your work better and rise to a promotion."

LONG-TERM EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

Some students volunteer that social and emotional skills would help them stay in school by making school more enjoyable and helping them to better manage their frustrations. Because intrapersonal skills help develop a sense of identity and purpose, students believe these skills will give them the direction they need to succeed in college and in career. One seventh grade girl explains, "Learning about yourself as a person is important so that you have an idea about what you want to do when you are older. When you know who you are, what you want to do, and who you want to be, then you can know how to get there."

FIGURE 8 Social and emotional issues such as lack of motivation and poor student behavior are seen as at least somewhat of a problem in many schools.

How much of a problem is this in your school?

	Very big problem	Fairly big problem	Somewhat of a problem	
Students' lack of interest in learning	13%	14%	42%	**69%**
Poor student behavior in class	11%	9%	37%	**57%**
Bullying	3%	6%	33%	**42%**
Negative school climate	4%	6%	23%	**33%**
Poor relationships between teachers and students		3%	13%	**16%**
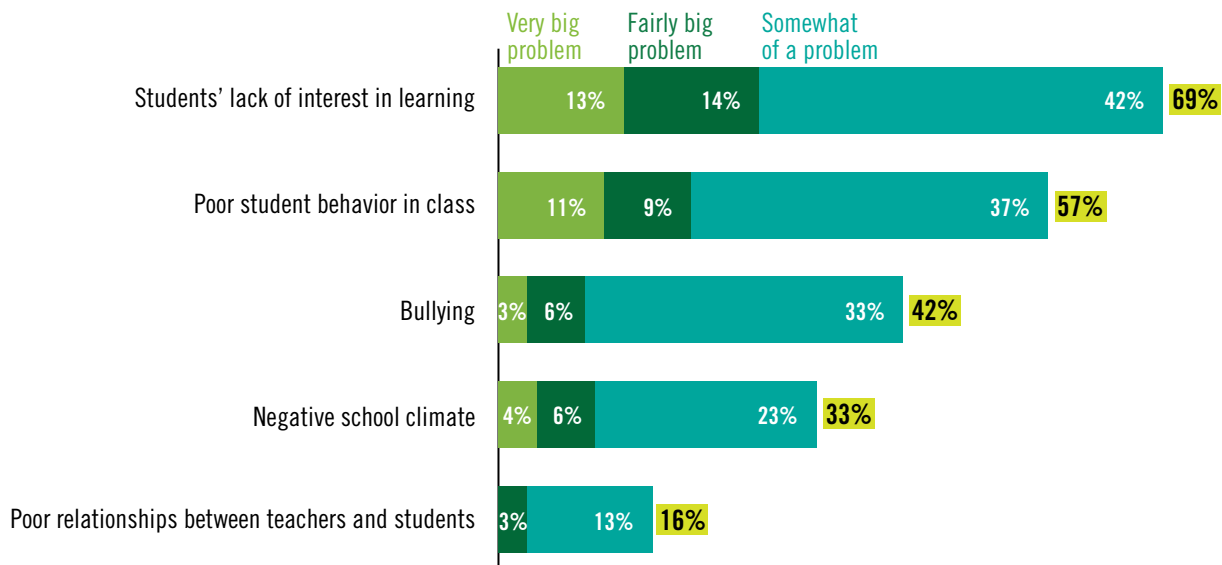
attendance and graduation rates), fewer negative behaviors (decreased disruptive class behavior, noncompliance, aggression, delinquent acts, and disciplinary referrals), and reduced emotional distress (fewer reports of student depression, anxiety, stress, and social withdrawal).[64]

These benefits of SEL are invaluable in a school setting where young students are navigating not only academic challenges but also the interpersonal challenges of adolescence. As Margaret Spellings, U.S. Secretary of Education (2005–09), says, "The academic pieces and SEL have to be mutually reinforcing. High-quality

> More than three in four teachers (77 percent) believe teaching SEL will increase standardized test scores and overall academic performance (77 percent).

teachers understand this intuitively — but we need to integrate these far better than we are today." Likewise, studies show that with specifically designed SEL interventions, dropout trends can be reversed, especially if action is taken at the first signs of struggle.[65] Many psychosocial intervention programs ("therapeutic SEL"[66]) are used for children with existing behavioral issues. Many schools across the socioeconomic spectrum are also implementing "character growth" programs that have decreased the amount of conduct referrals and bullying incidents.[67] SEL programs have been shown to be effective at preschool,[68] elementary,[69] middle,[70] and high school levels;[71] at urban, suburban, and rural schools; and with students from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.[72]

In addition to specific benefits to students, a summary of fifteen years of research on school reform reveals that SEL is a powerful strategy and lever for school improvement.[73] The

study identifies five essential supports for effective school change — one of which is a learning climate that is safe, welcoming, stimulating, and nurturing to all students. Research shows that schools strong in the essential supports were at least ten times more likely to show substantial gains in both reading and mathematics than schools weak in the supports. In study after study, SEL programs have an immediate effect on outcomes, such as academic achievement, social behavior, and positive self-image.[74] A teacher from Chicago whose school is implementing evidence-based social and emotional programming explains, "Something … that I notice [is that] all these kids have really positive relationships with each other. … because of what we do in the classroom, and so they all build these relationships with each other. And I think that's a huge outcome of SEL."

Our nationally representative survey of teachers confirms this research. Teachers believe that SEL helps achieve key goals

such as boosting academic performance and reaching grade-level reading proficiency. They also report that SEL helps overcome key challenges they face in their classrooms, including student lack of interest, poor student behavior, and bullying (Figure 8).

SEL Boosts Academic Performance

According to the survey, boosting student academic performance is the key goal teachers aim to achieve with their students. Moving successfully through the school system, excelling at coursework, earning high marks on standardized tests, and staying on track to graduate are all benchmarks of a student's academic success. The research consistently shows the academic benefits of SEL — and teachers' voices echo this. Students' ability to regulate emotion, attention, and behavior is related to academic achievement.[75] SEL helps students become more self-aware and confident in their learning abilities. Progress in

> "[SEL] would help students learn the other core subjects. It would help students be attentive in class, form good habits, solve problems, and plan ahead."
>
> — Eighth grade boy

social and emotional competencies also helps students with stress management, problem solving, and decision-making; these skills in turn have been found to help them get better grades.[76] More cognitive forms of regulation, such as inhibition control, are related to academic success, especially in young children.[77] Schools teaching SEL on a programmatic basis are more likely to develop students' knowledge and skills in key content areas, such as English, history, science, and math.[78] A teacher from Philadelphia explains, "If the students are better prepared, which [SEL] helps them to be, then they are also better prepared to learn the core curriculum because they're getting their social needs met and their emotional needs met. They're going to do better at school — that's the bottom line."

The majority of teachers believe SEL will help students move successfully through the school system and stay on track to graduate (80 percent) and improve student achievement in academic coursework (75 percent). More than three in four teachers (77 percent) believe teaching SEL will increase standardized test scores and overall academic performance (77 percent). Some district leaders also recognize the strong connection between SEL and academic learning, explaining that SEL is the foundation for academic success. These leaders observe more students on task and learning, less disengaged and off task in schools where SEL implementation is a district priority. Student voices echo these opinions. A seventh grade girl says, "In a class where everyone respects the teacher, it is more peaceful and there is a more steady

environment, so you can learn better. In a class where the majority of people don't appreciate the teacher, classes would be disturbed frequently and you can't learn as much."

Further, teachers strongly believe that developing knowledge and skills in key content or subject areas should have a great deal of emphasis in schools — and that SEL is linked to that success. For example, teachers in schools where SEL is taught on a schoolwide basis are more likely to say their school is very or fairly successful at developing key content and subject areas (85 percent), compared to teachers in schools where SEL is taught on an ad hoc basis (72 percent) or not at all (63 percent). A teacher from Chicago explains, "In order to get to the academics, you sometimes have to tackle social and emotional skills first, to be able to get kids to focus, to be able to get past all of this to get to instruction so that they're learning at their maximum potential." An eighth grade boy adds, "[SEL] would help students learn

the other core subjects. It would help students be attentive in class, form good habits, solve problems, and plan ahead."

SEL Increases Student Interest in Learning

Research shows that the lack of social and emotional skills is correlated with student disengagement with learning. By high school, 40 to 60 percent of students become chronically disengaged from school, but social and emotional skills development, such as a caring and encouraging environment or positive interpersonal relationships, can change that.[79] An eighth grade girl explains, "We are probably worse at thinking through the effects of our choices. A lot of people regard classes as though they don't really matter because it is just eighth grade, but it really could affect getting into college and your whole future."
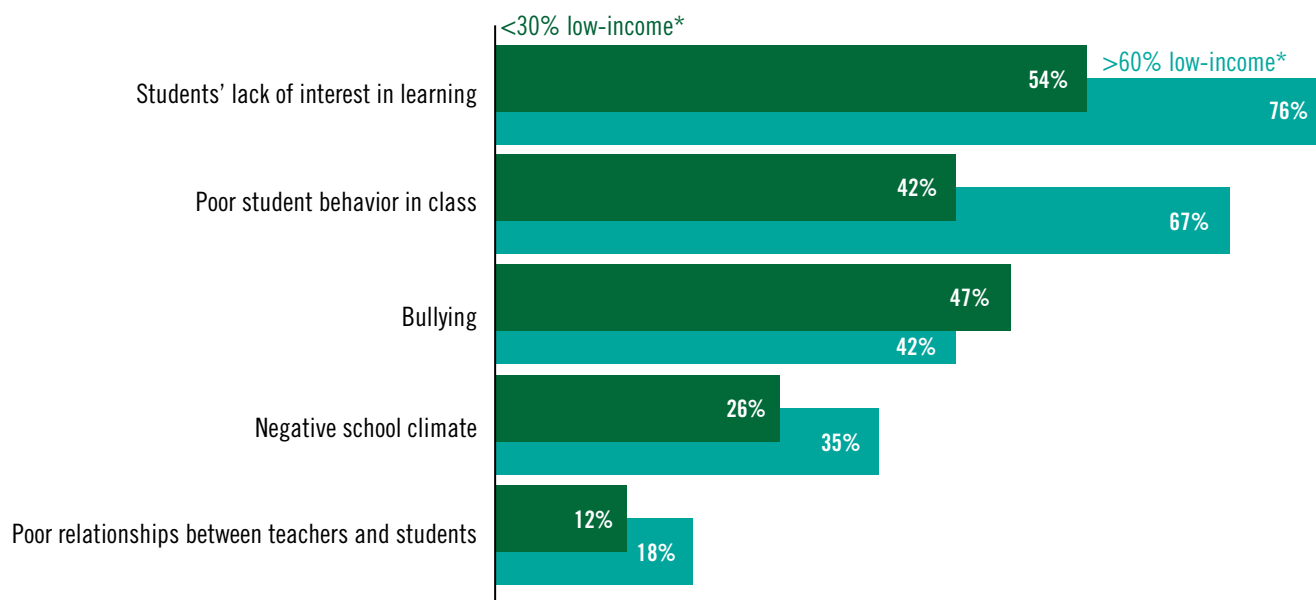
Teachers view SEL as a solution to this key challenge. Nearly seven in ten

teachers (69 percent) view student lack of interest as at least somewhat of a problem in school. Among these teachers, 73 percent say SEL is very important and 78 percent report it will improve academic performance. The survey also finds a correlation between student interest and schools with limited focus on SEL. Only 61 percent of teachers in schools where SEL is taught schoolwide report lack of interest in learning as a problem, while 74 percent of teachers in schools where SEL is taught only by some teachers and 77 percent of teachers in schools where SEL is not taught at all.

Student lack of interest is particularly acute in high-poverty schools (Figure 9). Three in four teachers (76 percent) in schools with 60 percent or more students in the free/reduced-price lunch program cite lack of interest as at least somewhat of a problem, compared to just half (54 percent) in schools with 30 percent or fewer students in the free/reduced-price lunch program. In a survey of dropouts,

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FIGURE 9   **Lack of interest in learning and poor student behavior are larger problems in high-poverty schools.**

This is at least somewhat of a problem in my school:

<30% low-income*
>60% low-income*

	<30% low-income*	>60% low-income*
Students' lack of interest in learning	54%	76%
Poor student behavior in class	42%	67%
Bullying	47%	42%
Negative school climate	26%	35%
Poor relationships between teachers and students	12%	18%

Income measured by free and reduced-price lunch.

nearly 70 percent report that they were not motivated to work hard, and two-thirds would have worked harder if more had been demanded of them.[80] While teachers think SEL should be available in all schools — not just high-poverty schools — SEL can play a unique role in engaging students in high-poverty areas.

Research corroborates teachers' views: Studies have found that students who receive high-quality SEL instruction, including students in schools with high rates of poverty, demonstrate improved attitudes and behaviors, including a greater motivation to learn, improved relationships with peers, and a deeper connection to their school.[81] Where the primary goal of a program is to improve social and emotional skills, the number of SEL lessons delivered is also related to fewer unexcused absences among girls.[82] This suggests that a strong SEL program can help reduce student absenteeism and improve student interest — both indicators of whether a student is on or off track to graduate.

SEL Improves Student Behavior

Teachers list poor student behavior in the classroom as the second biggest problem in their school, after students' lack of interest in learning. A Philadelphia elementary school teacher explains, "The children who can self-manage, who are self-aware, who hit each of these goals, these are the children who are more successful in my classroom. Last year, I had some children who had a very difficult time regulating their emotions and regulating their behavior. There was nothing cognitively wrong with them, but because they were not able to self-manage the behavior in the classroom, they were not at grade level, anywhere

> Students who receive SEL instruction have been found to exhibit reduced emotional distress, including fewer reports of depression, anxiety, stress, and social withdrawal.

close to it. And once you've lost that foundation, especially in the early years, it's very difficult to get that back."

According to the survey, more than half of teachers (57 percent) list poor behavior as at least somewhat of a problem. Of these teachers, three in four say SEL is very important (75 percent) and think it will improve student performance (79 percent). Research supports teacher's beliefs. School-based SEL interventions have been found to have indirect effects on reducing anxiety and depression, preventing aggressive and antisocial behavior, and promoting positive pro-social behavior.[83] Students who receive SEL instruction have been found to have reduced emotional distress, including fewer reports of depression, anxiety, stress, and social withdrawal.[84]

SEL increases socially appropriate behavior and positive peer relations, while decreasing destructive internalization of behaviors.[85] For example, one elementary school in Austin, TX, taught students several strategies for successfully resolving conflicts as part of the district's SEL initiative. As a result, students began to use these strategies on their own during unstructured school hours such as recess or before or after school began. (Read more about this initiative on page 36.) Students in SEL programs enjoy on average a 9–10 percentage point improvement in positive attitude, conduct problems, and emotional distress, compared to students not participating in SEL universal programs.[86] In a study on the Strong Start K–2 SEL curriculum, a statistically significant percentage of students exhibited behavior problems at the onset but then decreased during the intervention period.[87] Furthermore, students in the program were less likely to internalize behaviors than students outside of the program. An eighth grade boy explains, "Some kids are disrespectful … Students may not listen or they may do something wrong. It ruins

Research shows that levels of conflict decrease significantly in classrooms receiving SEL instruction, while classrooms not receiving SEL instruction experience an increase in conflict.

the class for everyone else there. They are taking away from the other kids and from themselves."

Schools with limited SEL may have more students with poor behavior — and our survey provides evidence of these linkages. For example, teachers who work in schools that they believe place too little emphasis on SEL also are more likely to say that poor student behavior is at least somewhat of a problem (68 percent) compared to teachers who say that their schools place the right amount of emphasis on SEL (53 percent). Less than half (44 percent) of teachers in schools that are very successful at developing SEL identify poor student behavior as a problem, compared to 66 percent of teachers who report their schools are less successful at SEL. Similarly, poor student behavior is identified as a problem by 67 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools, compared to only 42 percent in schools with less than 30 percent of students in free/reduced-price lunch programs.

SEL Prevents and Reduces Bullying

Bullying is a key challenge in many schools, according to both students and teachers. One seventh grade girl explains, "Overall, most kids don't have [social and emotional skills]. They are usually the people who hurt others' feelings, and they walk away as if it is their fault for crying." Nearly half (42 percent) of teachers say bullying is at least somewhat of a problem. Among teachers who see bullying as a problem, a majority also think SEL is very important (75 percent). Research supports this finding. Programs focusing on SEL improve student relationships with other students and teachers, and research has found that SEL also helps decrease the number of bullying incidents. Various

SEL improves school climate by establishing a safe, caring learning environment through peer initiatives, classroom management, school community building, and improved teaching techniques.

SEL programs have been found to cut in half the annual number of student fights, decrease violent behaviors by 19 percentage points, and reduce classroom hostility.[88] SEL helps students relieve stress, manage anger, and deal with social situations by fostering a sense of well-being, safety, and self-worth in students.[89] In fact, among the seven most common outcome categories of SEL programs, approximately half of the programs reduced antisocial behavior.[90] While students participating in SEL intervention programs frequently display conduct problems, such as aggression or bullying, participants in these programs received greater benefits.[91] Research also shows that levels of conflict decrease significantly in classrooms receiving SEL instruction, while classrooms not receiving SEL instruction experience an increase in conflict.[92]

Our survey also finds linkages between higher rates of bullying and schools with limited focus on SEL. About half of teachers (54 percent) who say their school places too little emphasis on SEL also say that bullying is at least somewhat of a problem. By comparison, about

one-third (37 percent) of teachers who say their school places the right amount of emphasis say bullying is a problem. In addition, more than half of teachers surveyed (51 percent) in schools having less success developing SEL also say that bullying is a problem compared to only one-quarter (26 percent) of teachers in schools they report are successful at SEL. Furthermore, only 37 percent of teachers in schools with systematic SEL list bullying as somewhat of a problem. While bullying is a problem in schools with high rates of poverty, it is reported as a larger problem in more schools with low rates of poverty (47 percent versus 42 percent in high-poverty schools).

SEL Improves School Climate

Thirty-four percent of teachers list negative school climate as at least somewhat of a problem. Not only is negative climate associated with poor behavior, lack of interest, and bullying, it also contributes to risky or self-destructive behaviors, poor motivation,

and poor academic achievement.[93] In a recent study, only 29 percent of sixth to twelfth graders feel their school provided a caring, encouraging environment.[94] The risk of students "developing harmful behaviors can be decreased and student achievement, performance and safety can be improved by [creating a positive] atmosphere … where academic success, respect for self, others and property and the motivation to learn and actively participate in the school's social life are expected and rewarded."[95]

Our survey finds that teachers in schools with less-developed SEL programs are more likely to report negative school climate as at least somewhat of a problem (34 percent) and schools with less-developed SEL are more likely to report their school has a negative school climate. Teachers who report their schools are very successful at developing SEL programs are half as likely to say their school has a negative school climate compared to teachers who report their school does not have strong SEL programs in place (21 percent versus 44 percent). Teachers in schools where SEL is not taught are nearly twice as likely to report negative school climate is a problem as teachers in schools where it is taught systematically (43 percent versus 28 percent).

Research has long supported the importance of a healthy school climate and using SEL as a means to create and sustain a positive learning environment. In a recent small sample study, 25 percent of the studied SEL programs were directed at making a change in school culture and climate.[96] Research has found that school-based SEL programs have significant effect on students' improved attitudes toward school and enhancing a student's positive

SNAPSHOT

CLEVELAND, OH: SEL IS INVALUABLE TO IMPROVING BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES AND SCHOOL SAFETY

Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) is a large urban district struggling to meet the needs of an economically and ethnically diverse community with a 48 percent youth poverty rate.[100,101] It is the second largest district in Ohio, serving more than 40,000 students, nearly 68 percent of whom are students of color, and 100 percent of whom qualify for free/reduced-price lunches.[102]

In October 2007, the former Superintendent called for heightened security measures in response to a shooting at one of the district's 26 high schools. One component of his school safety strategy was a comprehensive evaluation of the conditions for learning, including the status of SEL, in district schools. The evaluation findings listed eight contributing factors to poor school climate and student misbehavior, resulting in unsafe learning environments, including harsh and inconsistent approaches to discipline, poor adult supervision, and a lack of social and emotional role modeling by school staff.[103] In response, CMSD launched its Human Ware initiative in August 2008, in partnership with American Institutes for Research, focused on increasing the safety of the district's students.

Despite significant financial constraints in the past five years, the district continues to prioritize this work, adding CASEL as one of their key partners to help implement SEL programming systemically throughout the district. CASEL consultants provide technical assistance, coaching and training to district administrators and school leaders on planning, implementation, standards and assessment, and communication.

One of district's ten strategies to create a positive, safe, and supportive climate is to monitor students' behavior and intervene at the first sign of difficulties by strengthening social and emotional competencies to prevent future misbehaviors and providing focused and sustained support to those students who have persistent problems.[104] This strategy is markedly different from the prior disciplinary procedure that focused exclusively on punishment. CMSD has transformed its in-school suspension program into a restorative instructional program called The Planning Center. Here, center aides help students learn to understand and manage their emotions, improve behavior, make responsible decisions at school and at home, and build relationships with their peers and teachers. Students use Ripple Effect, a software program that allows them to virtually simulate potential conflicts and evaluate the consequences of various responses.[105] CMSD has also implemented Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), an evidence-based SEL program, in all its elementary schools.

Six years after the Superintendent's call to action and five years since the SEL initiative began, CMSD has seen several positive student behavioral outcomes including reductions in incidents of disobedient and disruptive behavior (from 132 to 74), fighting and violence (from 55 to 36), harassment and intimidation (from 13 to 6), and serious bodily injury (from 13 to 6).[106] Additionally, the average number of reported suspendable behavioral incidents per school declined from 233.1 to 132.4, and out-of-school suspensions decreased districtwide by 58.8 percent.[107] The current chief executive officer of CMSD, who has been with the district since 2007 and experienced the tremendous growth in SEL programming, insists that we should not forget to "look at the important ongoing needs for social and emotional wellness of children and adults in our communities" when trying to make our schools a safer and more supportive place.

> "Teaching these skills should be totally connected to the academic curriculum, because ultimately, these skills are not just important for the classroom, but for the workplace and for life."
>
> — Stan Litow, Vice President of Corporate Citizenship & Corporate Affairs, IBM

self-perception or self-esteem.[97] SEL improves climate by establishing a safe, caring learning environment through peer initiatives, classroom management, school community building, and improved teaching techniques.[98] As a result, students feel valued, are motivated, and develop a broad set of social and emotional competencies that lead to better academic performance, behavior, and citizenship.[99] A teacher from Chicago explains, "Students really need [to feel] happy at school, … before you can really engage them in reading and math."

ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL CHALLENGE
MANY GRADUATES DO NOT HAVE THE SKILLS TO BE SUCCESSFUL

Today's education system is not keeping up with the demands of tomorrow's workforce. A generation ago, two-thirds of all jobs required only a high school diploma or less. By the end of this decade, nearly two-thirds of America's jobs will require a postsecondary degree or certificate.[108] Only 78.2 percent of America's students graduate from high school on time, and fewer than 40 percent of 25–34-year-olds have some postsecondary degree.[109] Yet, 29 million jobs in the United States — nearly half of all jobs that pay middle-class wages — require more than a high school diploma but less than a Bachelor's degree.[110] By 2018, the nation will need 22 million new college degrees — but

will fall short of that number by at least three million postsecondary *degrees* (Associate's or higher).[111] In addition, we will need at least 4.7 million new workers with postsecondary *certificates*.[112] Employers also report that they are often unable to find job candidates with 21st century skills. This shortfall will mean lost economic opportunity for millions of American workers.

SEL can be a critical component for ensuring students are educated for the increasingly competitive school-to-work pipeline. When surveyed, more than 80 percent of dropouts say their chances of staying in school would have increased if classes were more interesting and provided opportunities for real-world learning.[113] A twelfth grade boy explains, "[Having social and emotional skills] would help you focus on your work better and rise to a promotion. The upper management looks for people to promote who have cool heads and are in control of their emotions."

The business sector agrees. Almost three decades ago, the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences and National Academy of Engineering convened a panel to identify the competencies that employers needed.[114] In addition to cognitive requirements, the panel identified competencies that relate to SEL. Human resource supervisors at companies wanted to see an ability to handle conflicts maturely; to work in groups to reach decisions; to demonstrate respect for the opinions, customs and

differences of others; to be punctual and dependable; to exercise self-discipline; to set goals, allocate time, and achieve them; and to accept responsibility.

The U.S. Department of Education in the 1990s conducted the Employer Employment Survey of more than 4,000 employers to identify the expectations they had for a skilled and proficient workforce.[115] The top two were skills obtained through social and emotional learning — attitude and communications skills.[116] Stan Litow, Vice President of Corporate Citizenship & Corporate Affairs at IBM, explains, "Teaching these skills should be totally connected to the academic curriculum, because ultimately, these skills are not just important for the classroom, but for the workplace and for life."

Other research reinforces these findings. The five most frequently reported applied skills that employers rate as "very important" all relate to SEL — professionalism, communication skills, teamwork and collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, and ethics and social responsibility.[117] Not only do employers look for "hard skills" unique to the specific field, but also "soft skills" such as cooperation in groups, effective leadership, empathy, civic mindedness, goal-oriented mindset, and persistence.[118]

However, according to a recent study of employers, 70 percent of high school graduates are considered deficient in professional work ethic, and 70 percent are deficient in critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.[119] These skills are particularly important for global jobs where employees must navigate complex informal networks and cultural differences.[120] The good news is that students participating in SEL programs had better social skills than 76 percent of students not in those programs.[121] Students who participate in SEL programs

have an average 23 percentage point gain in social-emotional skills than students who do not participate.[122] Businesses are beginning to catch on, creating reports that outline strategies for supporting employees and business school students in effective and appropriate business communication, but this can occur much earlier in the educational pipeline.[123]

Students agree. For example, a twelfth grade boy explains, "You have to be able to adapt to who you're working with in every situation, even in a job later in life." A ninth grade girl says, "Everyone is going to have coworkers where there are problems that come up. You will need to know how to solve the problems so you can settle your differences and move on and do your work."

Many leaders in government also agree. For example, Tim Ryan, Congressman from the 13th District of Ohio says, "Social and emotional competencies aren't 'soft skills.' They are fundamental and essential skills. They are the foundation for all the other skills. If we want a tolerant society, a compassionate society … we need to teach the skills that create that society — the social and emotional."

Teachers Believe SEL Will Help Prepare Students for the Real World

Teachers affirm that teaching social and emotional skills prepares their students for the real world (Figure 10). A majority of teachers (87 percent) believe SEL will be a major benefit in preparing students for the workforce. A similar majority (86 percent) believe developing students' ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world situations should have a great deal of emphasis in schools. Nearly eight in ten teachers also believe a larger focus on SEL will have a major benefit on students' ability to stay on track to graduate (80 percent), prepare for college (78 percent), and become good citizens as adults (87 percent). Teachers who believe SEL is very important are especially likely to believe schools should

> "Social and emotional competencies aren't 'soft skills.' They are fundamental and essential skills. They are the foundation for all the other skills. If we want a tolerant society, a compassionate society … we need to teach the skills that create that society — the social and emotional."
>
> — Congressman Tim Ryan, Ohio's 13th District

place a great deal of emphasis on social and emotional skills (69 percent). Teachers who say SEL improves academic performance (74 percent) feel the same way. A teacher from Philadelphia explains, "I'm trying to teach my students to be respectful — how to work cooperatively, how to respond to each other, and really be a person in society … They need those skills as well to succeed."

FIGURE 10   **Teachers believe greater emphasis on social and emotional learning would have major career, school, and life benefits.**

Larger focus on social and emotional learning would have a major benefit on this:

Preparing students for the workforce	87%
Students' becoming good citizens as adults	87%
Students' ability to move successfully through school, stay on track to graduate	80%
Preparing students to get to and through college	78%
Student achievement in academic coursework	75%

TEACHERS IDENTIFY KEY ACCELERATORS FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social and emotional learning (SEL) provides an opportunity for a powerful, student-centric approach to education that puts the social and emotional development of the child at the heart of every classroom, school, and district. Academic, social, and emotional learning are inextricably linked, and SEL can accelerate student learning by increasing students' intrinsic motivation to achieve, their ability to be attentive and engaged in their work, their satisfaction with learning, their sense of belonging, and their desire to work cooperatively with other students. SEL also helps teachers become more effective, by fostering their own social and emotional development and supporting a caring and challenging classroom climate. SEL programs are gaining in popularity and are increasingly being integrated into school curricula. In the survey, teachers identified several ways to accelerate the use of SEL in classrooms, schools, and communities.

Adopt Schoolwide Programming

While the organic demand for SEL exists, teachers often resort to a fragmented approach to introduce crucial social and emotional skills to their students.

Although the research on the efficacy of a systemic approach to SEL versus a more ad hoc approach is limited, it is sensible to think a more systemic approach would support student outcomes while also easing time burdens on educators. For example, schoolwide initiatives would support resource sharing and

reinforce lessons. In discussions with administrators and teachers from schools with proven SEL programs, education leaders stress that whole school buy-in is crucial to their success. These programs boast systemic implementation and include teacher and administrator involvement as well as professional development and participation of school staff and part-time personnel.
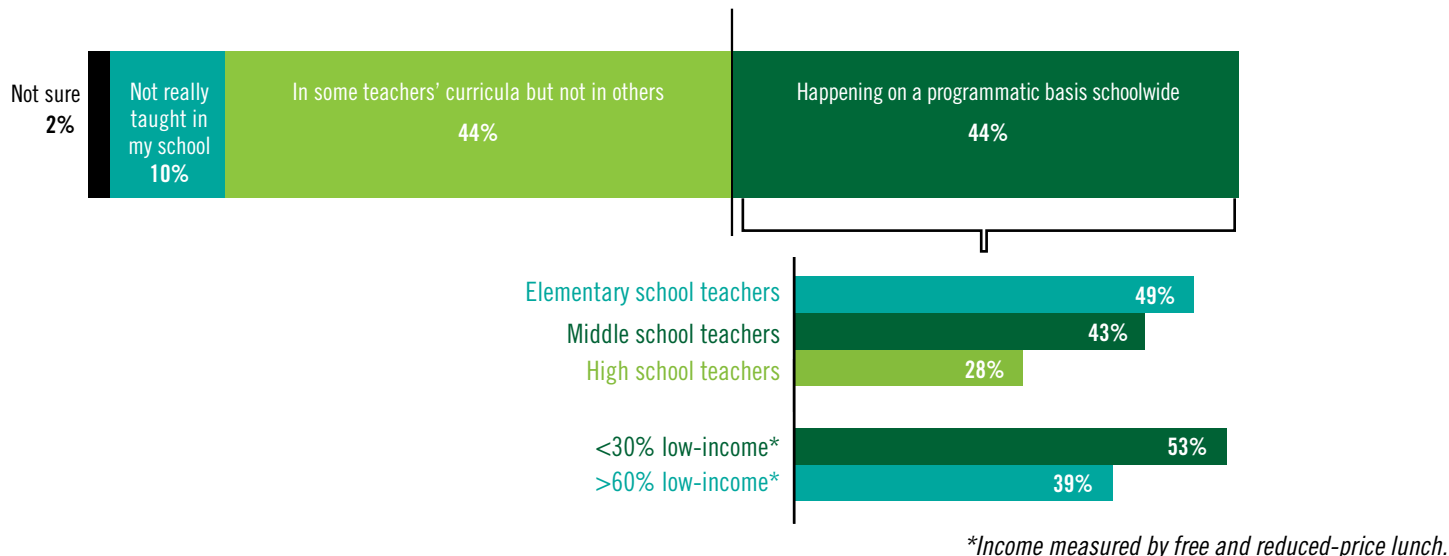
Schools are expected increasingly to play a large role in the development of youth from children to well-balanced adults.[124] While the survey indicates SEL is occurring organically, many schools do not view SEL as a core part of the education mission and many efforts are fragmented.[125] Less than half (44 percent) of teachers surveyed say social and emotional skills are being taught on a schoolwide programmatic basis (Figure 11). The lack of SEL programming is especially stark at the high school level: Only 28 percent of high school teachers say it is occurring schoolwide, compared to 43 percent of middle school teachers and 49 percent of prekindergarten and elementary school teachers. In addition

Less than half (44 percent) of teachers surveyed say social and emotional skills are being taught on a schoolwide programmatic basis.

FIGURE 11

FIGURE 11 Fewer than half of teachers report that social and emotional skills are taught in their schools on a programmatic basis.

To what extent is teaching students social and emotional skills happening in your school?

Not sure 2%	Not really taught in my school 10%	In some teachers' curricula but not in others 44%	Happening on a programmatic basis schoolwide 44%

Elementary school teachers 49%
Middle school teachers 43%
High school teachers 28%

<30% low-income* 53%
>60% low-income* 39%

*Income measured by free and reduced-price lunch.

to high schools, teachers report that only 39 percent of high-poverty schools have schoolwide SEL programming (where at least 60 percent of the student body are on free/reduced-price lunch).

Only 15 percent of teachers identify the school administration as a major barrier to implementing SEL in their school. Rather, they say the biggest challenge is time. Nearly half of teachers (49 percent) volunteer that there is not enough time in the day and that mandates have stretched them too thin. When prompted, 81 percent of teachers say not enough time to take on something new is a big challenge for a school trying to implement SEL programming, and 65 percent say it is a very big challenge. Despite the lack of time, the demand for SEL programming remains. These teachers still value

SEL: 81 percent say they are fairly/very interested in receiving additional SEL training and 80 percent still think SEL is very important. Providing tools from the system or school level, or integrating SEL through schoolwide activities and classroom instruction, could support teachers in achieving their goal of SEL implementation while not significantly adding to their time burdens.

Research corroborates the need for systematic SEL instruction. By applying SEL programming on a schoolwide basis, social and emotional skills may be taught, practiced, and applied to a diverse number of situations reflecting daily student life.[126] Effectively implementing SEL programming requires more than ad hoc teacher efforts, but rather ongoing professional development, coaching,

and monitoring that can only be found if a schoolwide, systematic SEL process is put into motion.[127] However, there is a gap in research analyzing the effect of systematic schoolwide SEL instruction and evaluation versus individual, interventional, or ad hoc approaches. Focusing resources to research and analyze the benefits of systemic schoolwide SEL programming plus classroom-based instruction could help ensure more effective SEL programming in schools.

Embed SEL in Student Learning Standards

Nearly two-thirds of teachers (62 percent) think the development of social and emotional skills should be explicitly stated in their state standards (Figure 12). This sentiment is shared by more than half the teachers in all grade-level subgroups: prekindergarten and elementary school, 65 percent; middle school, 64 percent; and high school, 55 percent. Nearly seven in ten teachers in
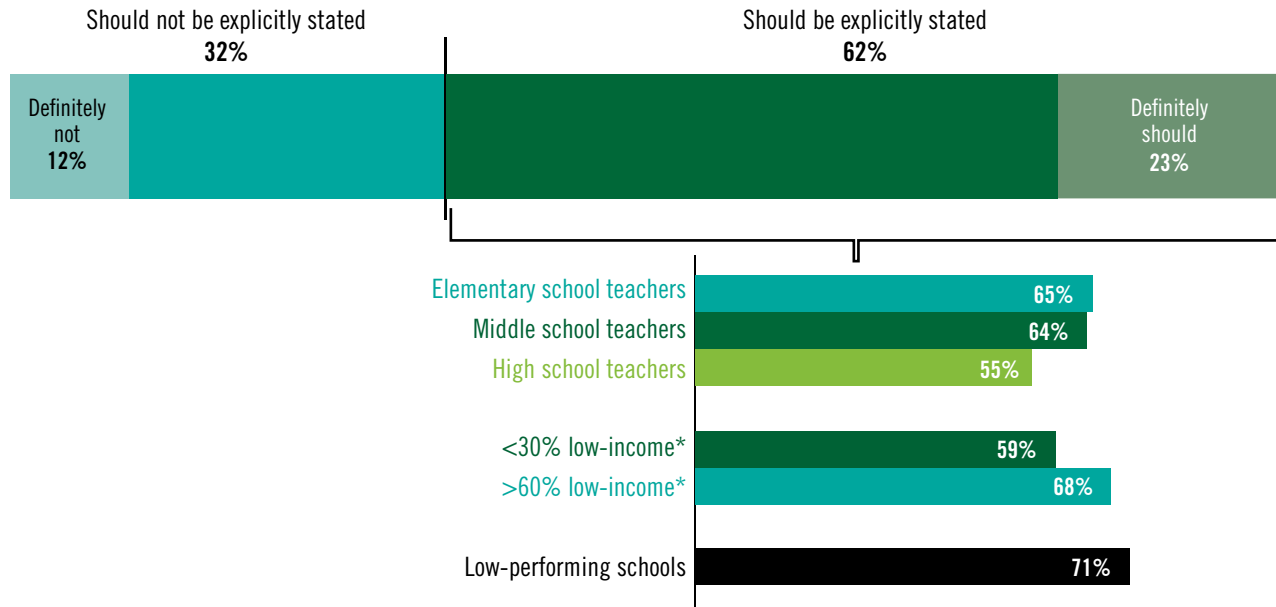
Nearly two-thirds of teachers (62 percent) and three-quarters of teachers in low-performing schools (71 percent) think the development of social and emotional skills should be explicitly stated in their state education standards.

FIGURE 12 Teachers believe the development of social and emotional skills should be explicitly stated in their state's education standards.

Should the development of social and emotional skills be explicitly stated in your state's education standards?

Should not be explicitly stated
32%

Should be explicitly stated
62%

| Definitely not **12%** | | Definitely should **23%** |

Elementary school teachers **65%**
Middle school teachers **64%**
High school teachers **55%**

<30% low-income* **59%**
>60% low-income* **68%**

Low-performing schools **71%**

*Income measured by free and reduced-price lunch.

high-poverty schools (68 percent) and six in ten teachers in low-poverty schools (59 percent) are likely to want SEL in their state standards. Teachers in low-performing schools want SEL explicitly stated in the state standards, with nearly three in four (71 percent) endorsing the concept.

While it is difficult to provide clear-cut guidelines, research has shown that successful SEL interventions use program manuals or professional development materials to help maintain implementation integrity and improve the odds for success.[128] State learning standards encourage uniformity and coherence, and they help present a coordinated approach to a particular educational goal.[129] Learning standards may increase the likelihood that students will receive better instruction in SEL, experience improved school connectedness, and become better learners, because arguably standards will encourage schools to take SEL more seriously.[130] For example, when SEL standards were introduced in Illinois, many schools responded by developing plans, selecting evidence-based programs, and implementing schoolwide programs to promote students' social, emotional, and academic learning.[131] All 50 states have learning standards for prekindergarten, and 34 states have learning standards for infants and toddlers — and at both levels, almost all include SEL-related guidelines.[132] Illinois is one of the first states to add SEL standards alongside its academic standards.[133] (See snapshot on page 39 for more information on the Illinois state standards.) Kansas has adopted similar standards; in 2012 Kansas integrated Social, Emotional, and Character Development into a single set of standards for K–12.[134]

Teachers also endorse some evaluation methods for SEL. Only 16 percent of teachers state they have an evaluation system in place for social and emotional skills, and roughly half (51 percent) have a system for evaluating school climate. Despite this lack of current evaluation, nearly seven in ten teachers (68 percent) say it would probably or definitely be worthwhile for social and emotional skills to be evaluated on student report cards. Research indicates that social and emotional skills can be successfully evaluated and assessed. Yale's RULER approach requires report cards to contain three items reflecting social competence and grades these on a scale of one to five. However, because many students have multiple teachers or may act differently in different classes, the score

Four in five teachers (82 percent) report interest in receiving further training on SEL.

is a composite score.[135] PATHS, Raising Healthy Children, Second Step, and Too Good for Violence are other SEL programs that have successfully used assessment tools, such as self-reporting and teacher observation, to measure student behavior.[136]

Improve and Increase Professional Development for SEL

Learning is a lifelong endeavor, and for teachers from several districts across the nation, this is especially true for SEL. Some teachers report it is easier to implement SEL in their classrooms after they themselves improved their social and emotional competencies and learned the associated language, enabling them to better model SEL positively for their students. Teachers feel more ownership over the process and more personal investment in its success when they are better trained.

According to the survey, only half of teachers (55 percent) receive some form of SEL training, 23 percent of them in-service (Figure 13). Prekindergarten and elementary school teachers are the most likely to receive SEL training (60 percent), while high school teachers are the least likely (47 percent). Four in five teachers (82 percent) report wanting further training on SEL, with 61 percent fairly or very interested (Figure 15). Three in four teachers (73 percent) view lack of training and knowledge on how to teach social and emotional skills as at least somewhat of a challenge to implement SEL in their classrooms.

Research supports teachers' beliefs that SEL programming is more effective when teachers are trained properly in SEL techniques, terminology, and methods. For example, 95 percent of teachers acquire the knowledge and skills needed for applying SEL in the classroom when training and SEL coaching are combined.[137] Teachers who attend more

training sessions and teach more SEL classes have students who score higher on social problem solving, emotional literacy, and social competence.[138] Teachers' confidence in their ability to teach influences their delivery of SEL programming.[139] Effective teacher training is needed to ensure program success and sustainability, as teachers are uniquely positioned with in-classroom responsibility for a child's learning.[140] A recent meta-analysis found that four in twelve successful school climate programs do not actually involve sessions for students. Rather, the programs instruct teachers how to enhance their teaching style and classroom techniques in order to enhance social skills such as cooperative learning, classroom management, and a student-centered approach.[141] Encouragingly, according to our national survey, teachers with experience and training in SEL are more receptive to the idea that these skills can be measured. Teachers with training are more likely to agree that "students'

FIGURE 13   Just over half of teachers have training in teaching social and emotional skills; high school teachers and those new to the profession are less likely to have it.

Have you received training on how to teach social and emotional skills to students?
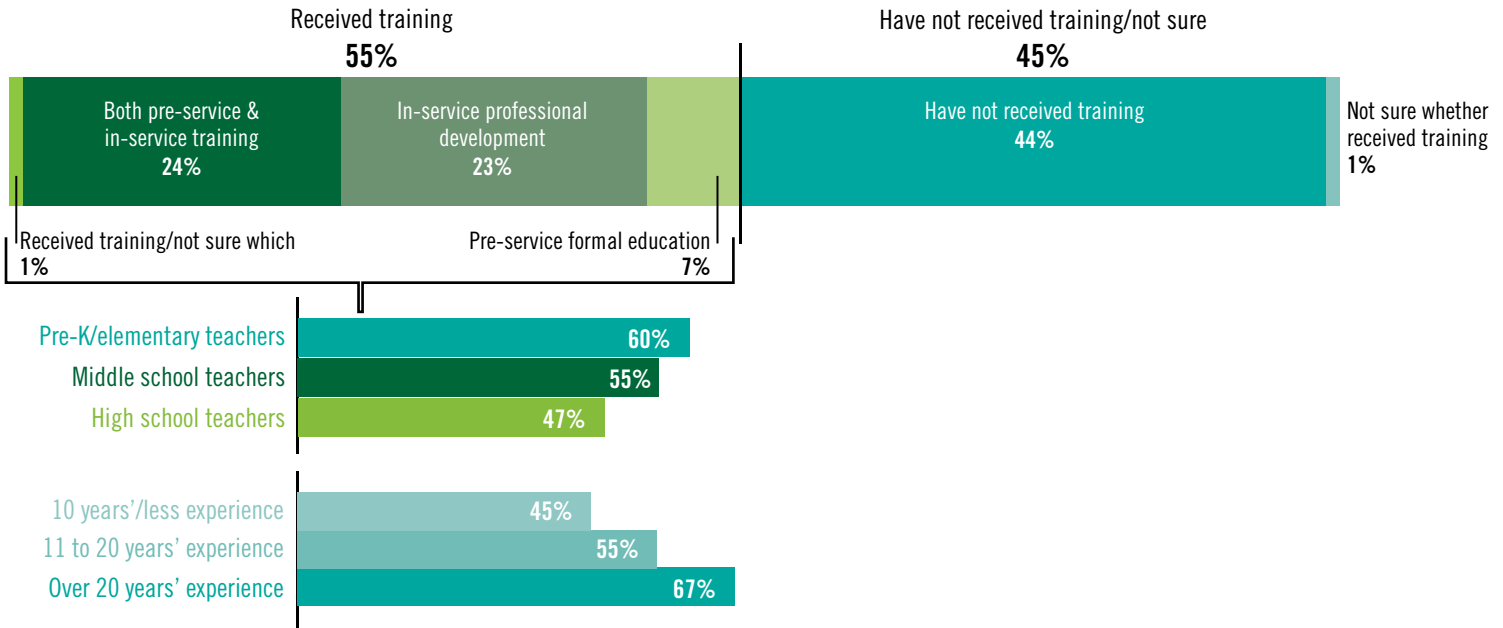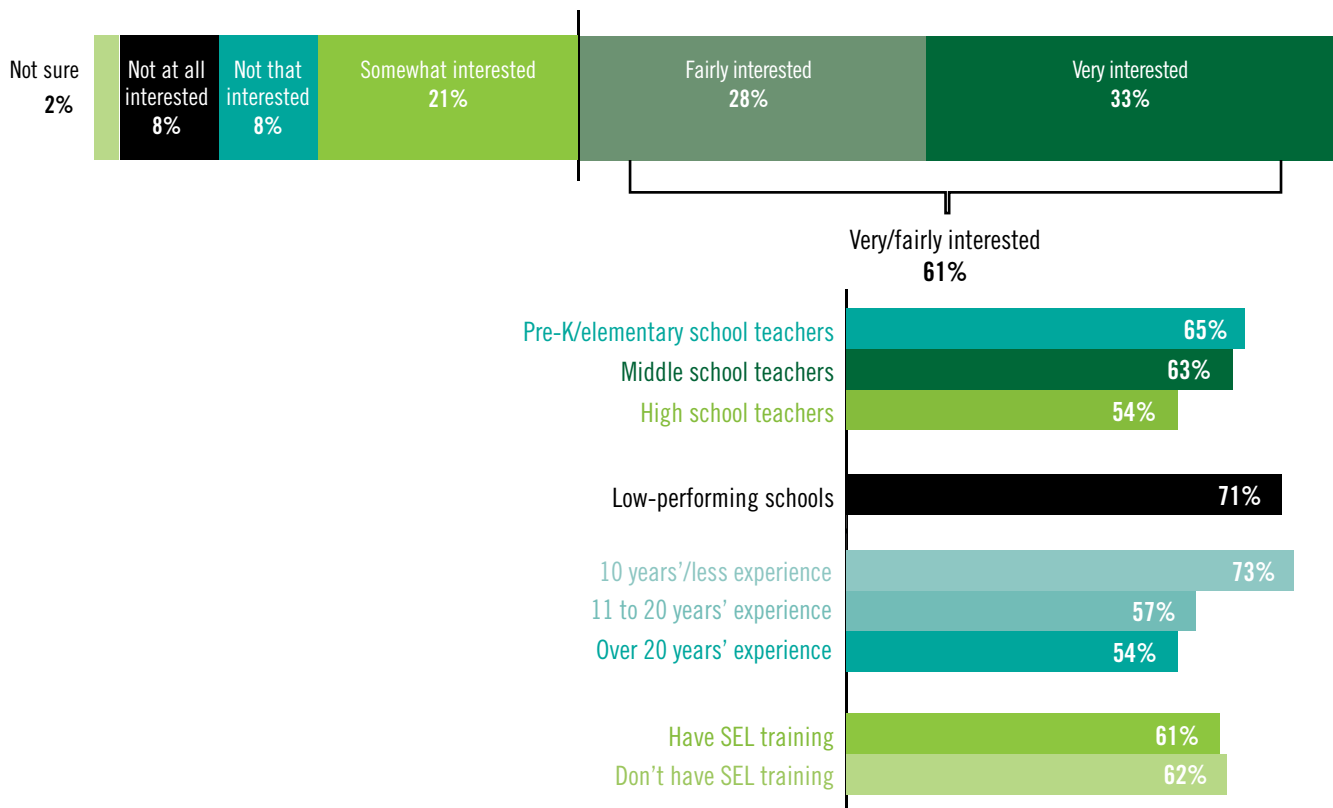
Received training
55%

Have not received training/not sure
45%

| Both pre-service & in-service training **24%** | In-service professional development **23%** | | Have not received training **44%** | Not sure whether received training **1%** |

Received training/not sure which
1%

Pre-service formal education
7%

Pre-K/elementary teachers	**60%**
Middle school teachers	**55%**
High school teachers	**47%**

10 years'/less experience	**45%**
11 to 20 years' experience	**55%**
Over 20 years' experience	**67%**

FIGURE 14   Majorities of teachers are interested in receiving further training in teaching social and emotional skills.

How interested are you in receiving further training on the best practices for teaching social and emotional skills to students?

| Not sure **2%** | Not at all interested **8%** | Not that interested **8%** | Somewhat interested **21%** | Fairly interested **28%** | Very interested **33%** |

Very/fairly interested
61%

Pre-K/elementary school teachers	**65%**
Middle school teachers	**63%**
High school teachers	**54%**

Low-performing schools	**71%**

10 years'/less experience	**73%**
11 to 20 years' experience	**57%**
Over 20 years' experience	**54%**

Have SEL training	**61%**
Don't have SEL training	**62%**

development and acquisition of social and emotional skills can be accurately measured and assessed" (49 percent versus 33 percent of teachers without training).

Engage Parents and Families

Finally, teachers recognize the importance of the connection between home and school. One teacher from Philadelphia explains, "The kids who get [social and emotional skills development] from home need reinforcement. The students who don't get it at home need to be taught it." Teachers volunteer "[students] not learning [social and emotional skills] at home" among top reasons to teach these skills in school. But eight in ten teachers (81 percent) say lack of skills reinforcement at home is a big challenge when trying to integrate SEL into teaching. More than half of teachers (66 percent) identify it as a very big challenge. A similar majority who view SEL as very important (80 percent) and think it definitely improves student academic performance (80 percent) say lack of reinforcement at home is a major challenge. Encouragingly, several districts have made parental involvement a priority in their SEL implementation plans. For example, administrators in

> "The kids who get [social and emotional skills development] from home need reinforcement. The students who don't get it at home need to be taught it."
>
> — Teacher, Philadelphia

Montgomery County, MD, have worked hard to ensure that parents are on board with and understand SEL. (To read more about MCPS' efforts in increase parental support, see page 19.)

Social and emotional skills are developed or further enhanced whenever a child interacts not just with fellow peers and teachers, but also with parents and other family members. Research shows that family involvement helps facilitate children's cognitive, social, and emotional learning in addition to more positive attitudes toward school, better behavior, and higher self-esteem.[142] In fact, family support and involvement is most strongly associated with student engagement.[143] Children whose parents are more involved in their education have higher rates of attendance and course completion, better grades, and higher tester scores.[144] Motivational supports for learning, specifically a supportive home environment, are important to facilitating academic achievement.[145] When adolescents perceive they have a strong connection between home and school,

they are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors.[146] Research also finds that SEL can help improve home life. The learning and emotional climate of both home and school improves as children gain self-awareness, social awareness, empathy, problem-solving skills, and other social and emotional competencies.[147] A recent meta-analysis found that school-based programs that focus on parent involvement and engagement programs have statistically significant, positive effects on student outcomes,[148] in contrast to programs that only require voluntary parent engagement.[149] School-based shared reading programs are an example of teacher-parent partnerships successfully improving student outcomes.[150] A 2010 meta-analysis found that after-school programs that focus on fostering personal and social skills have a positive effect on a range of student outcomes, including improved self-perception, positive behavior, and academic achievement.[151]

SNAPSHOT
AUSTIN, TX: SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFORTS ALIGN FOR SEL RESULTS

Nestled in south-central Austin, TX, Cunningham Elementary School serves 441 students, about 57 percent of whom are Hispanic, 28 percent White, and 15 percent students of color.[152,153] More than two in three students (69 percent) are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program.[154] This diverse elementary school has recognized the importance of SEL for many years, but lacked a cohesive program, implementing only diffuse or informal pieces. Now, with support from the district, teachers and administrators are fitting those pieces together to create a unified approach to SEL, embedded in all aspects of the school. Once a month, during staff meeting, the principal has faculty share SEL best practices, develop schoolwide SEL activities, and discuss the importance of the whole child focus in education. Teachers also work to identify academic areas in which SEL could easily be integrated into existing lessons. For example, the art teacher works with students to make posters, strategically placed throughout the school, that remind students of strategies they can use to solve their problems and interact positively with their peers.

Cunningham also has "peace paths," where students in conflict begin on either side, following the step-by-step instructions on each successive square until they find a resolution and meet in the middle. The path is available both inside and outside the school so that in lessons or in play, social and emotional skills are easily practiced. The "peace path" was also shared with parents during an SEL-dedicated coffee session hosted by the school's principal. Parents reacted positively, asking to schedule a larger PTA meeting that would focus on teaching parents more strategies for practicing social and emotional competencies with their kids in their own homes. To evaluate the effectiveness of its SEL programming, Cunningham Elementary participates in the districtwide school climate survey and administers its own playground survey to assess student perceptions and growth.

Cunningham is part of Austin Independent School District (AISD), one of eight big-city districts nationwide collaborating with CASEL to implement SEL systemwide. AISD is in its second year of implementation. Led by the district's Social and Emotional Learning Department in partnership with CASEL's Collaborating Districts Initiative, 57 Austin schools have started implementing systemic SEL, with the goal that all 122 schools will be implementing within the next three years.[155]
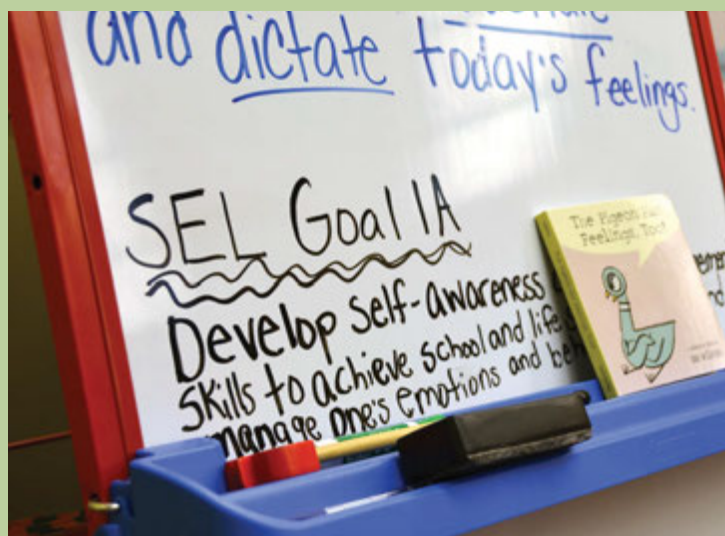
AISD relies on a collaborative approach, providing training in self-management and conflict resolution to many of its school personnel, including cafeteria monitors and classified employees. It aims to create a common vocabulary and ways of interaction throughout the district so teachers, administrators, staff, and students across grade levels can successfully articulate their thoughts and feelings, strengthening relationships and problem-solving skills. All elementary, middle, and high schools also have their own SEL campus facilitator (an on-site champion who works to build capacity within schools for SEL).

The SEL department is developing a districtwide parent series to teach parents about the importance of SEL and familiarize them with the common language so that they, too, may reinforce learning at home and provide guided practice. AISD also uses the *Second Step* program in its elementary and middle schools and *School Connect* in its high schools. These age-appropriate curricula are specifically designed to help students develop positive social and emotional competencies.[156] In addition to these districtwide initiatives, each school has its own unique strategies, evaluating their resources to design SEL practices that work best for them and their students.

After these first two years, AISD administrators assert that the change in school climate is palpable. More students are on task and engaged during lessons. Discipline referrals are down and student interactions are more positive. The district is using these observable shifts as evidence of positive change to try to help secure increased funding for SEL programs by giving potential donors tours of their schools.[157] The principal of Cunningham advises educators throughout the nation to "run to get SEL and run fast," because it can make a difference in your schools and your students' lives.

PATHS FORWARD

As a nation, we have the opportunity to change the lives of millions of American youth with the use of a very powerful strategy — social and emotional learning (SEL). SEL gives students the fundamental skills to achieve in school and succeed in life. Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making are the core competencies that teach all of us how to handle our relationships, our careers, and ourselves in an effective and fulfilling manner. Research consistently documents the benefits of SEL. Our survey provides powerful evidence that teachers endorse this transformative strategy as well.

Although SEL is starting to be incorporated in federal policies and initiatives such as the Race to the Top District requests for proposals and the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2013, it has not been sufficiently prioritized. Federal, state, and local education policy is not yet aligned with the basic insights of the SEL field, and there is a gap in the public's understanding of what SEL means; why it is important for education; and what parents, citizens, and young people can do to become effective SEL advocates and role models. To maximize the benefits of SEL, key polices and strategies must be pursued that promote, strengthen, and sustain SEL initiatives across the country. The following recommendations are guided by the opinions of more than 600 teachers in the nationally representative survey and informed by a variety of leading organizations and education-focused research groups.[158]

PROMOTE SEL IN CLASSROOMS, SCHOOLS, AND COMMUNITIES

Link SEL to Schoolwide Activities and Other School Services[159]

Educators can incorporate social and emotional skills into classroom instruction, all school topics, and

after-school activities. They can use goal-setting instructions and focus on problem-solving strategies and the decision-making process. Across the school, educators can stress the importance of SEL application, not only in the classroom but also in everyday life through consistent and age-appropriate supportive services. Based on the specific age and culture of students and needs of the school, school leaders can develop coordinated and explicit problem-solving strategies on targeted issues (e.g., healthy lifestyle, conflict resolution, and healthy study habits). They can provide time in the curricula for students and teachers to learn, work, and practice these strategies. Academic and social and emotional learning should be mutually reinforcing.

Conduct Resource and Needs Assessments in Schools[160]

For SEL to be a success on a systematic and strategic scale, the school and the community can determine the resources, needs, and readiness of the school

and identify SEL best practices and measures that fit their school. School leaders can conduct resource and needs assessments that build on evidence-based SEL programming that is already being implemented and appropriately addresses the needs identified by students, parents, and school staff. Not only does this create a sense of ownership in the program, because it involves high-level school officials and teachers, it can help increase parent buy-in. Furthermore, school leaders should strive to create a learning environment that fosters more extensive personal interaction. This will allow teachers to understand individual students better and allow students to feel more engaged in the learning process.

Ensure Effective Coordination with Out-of-School Partners[161]

Social and emotional skills development can link to all aspects of a child's life — including his or her home life and extracurricular activities. Family involvement facilitates child's cognitive,

social, and emotional learning and functioning. A successful school-family partnership (SFP) must be based on the idea that all families can contribute to a child's learning and development — and parents, as well as teachers, share the responsibility. Likewise, community-school partnerships can help to better facilitate a child's progress through school. Establishing partnerships with community-based program providers and agencies like social services, mental health, and welfare can provide further out-of-school support for students. To facilitate the creation of student-family-community partnerships, schools can create a position of SEL or SFP coordinator, who can be involved with program implementation and serve as a liaison with families and community partners. Teachers can share SEL strategies, tools, and resources that match the children's learning styles and skills with parents to help with at-home reinforcement. They can also coordinate with out-of-school services to recommend which competencies can be supported in extracurricular environments.

Getting families and community partners into the classroom to observe and actively participate in SEL is another means of earning parent and community partners' buy-in, as well as at-home and extra curricular reinforcement. Creating parent support during the assessment process includes home visits and engaging families in the initial program assessment. For example, students and parents can generate individual SEL goals at the beginning of each school year. This will encourage family presence in the later evaluation process. Family involvement in the subsequent individual assessment of students and during transitions (e.g. from middle to high school) can help parents and children navigate potentially stressful times.

STRENGTHEN SEL BY INVESTING IN EDUCATORS

Provide and Fund Integrated Professional Development for Educators[162]

Educators should be provided professional development on teaching social and emotional skills during both pre-service and in-service (professional development). Professional development should focus on the core social and emotional competencies as well as on the cultural competencies, needs, and issues of their school. Only after teachers have an understanding of the deeper needs and climate of a school and its student body can the appropriate SEL tools be utilized. Professional learning opportunities should be provided not only to teachers, but to administrators and professional and paraprofessional staff. Interdisciplinary training for counselors, teachers, administrators, and other school and district personnel can help these educators work as highly effective teams to better serve their students. This additional education should include coursework on SEL best practices and instruction on climate, relationships, school culture, parenting support, and behavioral management. Professional development should focus on teaching

SNAPSHOT
DUPAGE COUNTY, IL: IMPLEMENTING SEL STATE STANDARDS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL[170]

In 2003, section 15(a) of Illinois' Children's Mental Health Public Act 93-0495 required that the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) "develop and implement a plan to incorporate social and emotional development standards as part of the Illinois Learning Standards."[171] The Act was based on strong research indicating that students with social and emotional competencies are more ready to learn, have better classroom behavior and social and emotional development, and perform higher academically.[172] ISBE responded by developing clear and consistent standards for kindergarten through twelfth grade.[173] The standards have three main goals:[174]

- Goal 31 — Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.

- Goal 32 — Use social awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

- Goal 33 — Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Each goal encompasses several learning standards that are themselves broken down into benchmarks specifying developmentally appropriate social and emotional knowledge and skills for each grade level cluster: kindergarten to third grade, fourth to fifth grade, sixth to eighth grade, ninth to tenth grade, and eleventh to twelfth grade.[175] Finally, the benchmarks are made up of performance descriptors meant to aid educators in selecting and designing curricula, classroom activities, and assessments aligned with the standards.[176]

At El Sierra Elementary School in DuPage County, Illinois, part of Downers Grove Grade School District 58, teachers and administrators work hard to meet the state's SEL standards.[177] Downers Grove is one of many districts in DuPage County working with CASEL to implement these state standards on a local level. The support of SEL is so strong at El Sierra that two teachers were chosen to speak at a Capitol Hill briefing in September 2012 to promote awareness of SEL and its positive outcomes in school and in life.[178]

El Sierra serves 315 students, 65.1 percent White, 21.6 percent Hispanic, and 7.6 percent students of color.[179] The school uses Responsive Classroom, an evidence-based model designed to improve social skills and behavioral and academic outcomes.[180] The program advises teachers to set aside ten to fifteen minutes every morning for "Morning Meeting." El Sierra teachers assert that this time, used to practice social and emotional competencies and build a positive climate, has helped to dramatically transform the classroom environment. Students started working better in small groups, managing their emotions, and solving problems together. El Sierra also has implemented "School Families," a program in which a group of nine to ten students meets with a school staff member once a month for thirty minutes.[181] Each "school family" is made up of at least one student from each grade.[182] During meetings, students and the staff leader get to know one another and participate in activities and discussions based on that month's SEL theme.[183] One month, the groups talked about the concept of self-awareness — what it means to know themselves as a person and what they stand for.[184] Another month, School Families discussed regulating their emotions and ways to express anger that is both healthy and safe. School Families meet every month throughout their experience at El Sierra until they graduate and attend middle school.[185]

Both teachers and students are benefiting from El Sierra's SEL standards-aligned initiatives. Stronger relationships through Morning Meeting, School Families, and other programs have resulted in both teachers and students excited and eager to attend school every day to learn and grow together.[186]

educators how to integrate SEL into all areas of the curricula and create opportunities for student to apply social and emotional skills throughout the day.

Tie SEL to Classroom, School, and District Goals[163]

Students and educators alike should increase transparency around social and emotional skill development. School, district, and state education leaders should work to align systems of reporting and accountability to clearly defined goals. District support and leadership for SEL is critical and will determine the extent to which teachers and other school leaders can plan and proceed. Some districts, such as CASEL's Collaborating District Initiative in Anchorage, AK, have strategically integrated SEL into the core curriculum by developing benchmarks and standards and establishing a Department of Social and Emotional Learning.[164] One schoolwide approach is to develop an action plan that uses and reviews student data and adjusts for changing trends in the student population. This means identifying and prioritizing areas for improvement grounded in the data collected, looking for connections among different groups of students, examining trends in student social-emotional competencies, and reviewing SEL in conjunction with other school data (such as attendance). Research is needed to develop formative assessment tools that teachers can use to measure and track improvements in students' social and emotional competence.

Schools also can support student progress by reviewing report cards, discipline referrals, and attendance trackers to help identify students who may have recently experienced an event or social/behavioral problem that could foreshadow a higher risk of disengagement. Report cards can be modified to include social and emotional skill progress on a scale that uses common language and consistent routines based on the state standards.[165]

SUSTAIN SEL THROUGH HIGH-IMPACT LEVERS

Create SEL Standards and Connect with Common Core State Standards[166]

State legislators should connect social and emotional development in existing state student learning standards and/or create stand alone prekindergarten through twelfth grade social and emotional standards. Standards can provide clear expectations of what students should know and be able to do. These standards must be created in partnership with teachers, so that the standards support, not burden, teachers. Standards cannot be created with the unrealistic expectation that teachers in isolation can take on this important work. By providing clear guidance about evidence-based SEL approaches and what benchmarks must be reached in a given year, educators can have a manageable and clear framework with common language from which to interpret. Simultaneously, when these freestanding but focused standards are used, the focus is on the ends, and not the means. School districts and teachers then have the freedom to adopt SEL techniques and methods that suit their school's profile and needs. Connecting social and emotional competencies to Common Core standards and assessments can create additional incentives for districts to incorporate SEL into their education policies and practices.

Ensure Sustainable Funding for SEL[167]

Philanthropic and public investments, including Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), should identify SEL training and program implementation as funding priorities. The ESEA provides districts with the flexibility and resources to apply professional development and other funding as states and districts see fit. Schools and districts can use these dollars to support additional professional development. Further, the state departments of education and the U.S. Department of Education should create funding preferences in competitive education grants that reward states or schools that clearly articulate an SEL-focused plan for improvement. SEL policies can also be included in school improvement plans for low-performing schools.

Support Federal Policies that Promote SEL[168]

The U.S. Congress should pass bipartisan legislation supporting students' development through SEL. Representative Tim Ryan (D-OH) is planning to introduce the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2013 in May 2013, based on the same model legislation proposed in 2011 by Ryan and former Representatives Judy Biggert (R-IL) and Dale E. Kildee (D-MI). The bill seeks to expand the availability of programs that teach students skills such as problem solving, conflict resolution, responsible decision-making, relationship-building, goal-setting, and self-discipline. Other members of the House should sign on to

the House bill, and a similar bill should be introduced to the Senate.

Advance a Robust Research Agenda[169]

A robust pool of research can support the work of practitioners and policymakers alike. The Institute of Education Sciences needs to prioritize research on SEL and its effects on key issues such as school climate, bullying, student well-being, and academic performance. Additional important areas for exploration include evaluating the difference in impact between schoolwide SEL implementation versus classroom-only programs, as well as between standalone explicit social and emotional skills instruction versus integrating SEL with academic curriculum and teacher pedagogy. Another priority area involves developing or designing formative assessment, evaluation, and indicator systems that measure students' social and emotional competencies. Research on the impact of systemic district, school, and classroom programming as well as strategies to assess student social and emotional competencies would fill important research gaps. Furthermore, analysis and study of the effect of state SEL standards developed in California, Illinois, Kansas, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington can serve as a starting point to creating a useful body of research.

CONCLUSION

The lack of urgency around implementing social and emotional learning (SEL) in schools threatens the future success of America's children. SEL is a proven strategy that is endorsed by teachers across the country. Yet too few schools and far fewer school systems are adopting explicit evidence-based SEL strategies or integrating evidence-based SEL approaches — both of which are needed.

SEL has been underutilized for too long. Our lack of action inhibits students across the country from fully realizing their potential as knowledgeable, responsible, caring, and contributing individuals. The time has passed to debate whether schools should make SEL a central focus. Now we must act to ensure our students and teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in school, work, and life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

In November and December 2012, teachers and students across America were asked to participate in focus groups, surveys, and interviews to assess the role and value of social and emotional learning in America's schools. The nationwide telephone survey was conducted from December 7 to 10, 2012, among 605 preschool through twelfth grade public school teachers. The margin of error is ±4.0 percentage points in the full survey sample and higher among subgroups. Slight weights were applied to ensure that the sample matched teacher and school characteristics of public school teachers. We are confident that the survey sample, once weighted, represents a true national sample of public school teachers in America.

The survey was informed by three focus groups conducted among teachers in November and December 2012 to explore potential survey topics and to give some teachers an opportunity to express their views in their own words. Particular emphasis was placed on recruiting a diverse pool of participants in terms of school district, years in the profession, and personal demographic characteristics. Two of the focus groups took place in Philadelphia in November 2012; one of these comprised prekindergarten and elementary school teachers, and the other comprised a mix of middle and high school teachers. The third focus group with teachers took place in Chicago in December 2012 and included a mix of elementary, middle, and high school teachers, all of whom had ties to CASEL and personal experience teaching social and emotional learning.

The survey development and report findings also were informed by fifteen one-on-one, in-depth interviews with middle and high school students. The fifteen interviews with public school students in middle and high school were conducted in Philadelphia and Washington, DC, in November and December 2012. These interviews explored students' perspectives on the qualities of an engaging school environment and their views on specific social and emotional skills. Discussions with key leaders from the business, philanthropy, government, and education sectors, as well as an exhaustive Literature and Landscape Review of the most current research on social and emotional learning, also informed the report.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

The following profile of the 605 teachers interviewed for this survey reveals a sample that is representative of America's public school teachers in terms of demographic characteristics and the diverse schools in which they teach.

As the table below shows, the majority of teachers in the sample are women (77 percent) and white (86 percent). Teachers are distributed fairly evenly across a range of ages with the majority of teachers between the ages of 30 and 59.

The characteristics for the schools in which the teachers work are shown below. Nearly half (49 percent) of the teachers interviewed teach in prekindergarten or elementary schools while approximately one-quarter work in middle or junior high schools (24 percent) or in high schools (26 percent). The sample is comprised of teachers from a diverse array of schools. More than one-third (34 percent) teach at schools in which at least 60 percent of the students are on free/reduced-price lunch. Another 30 percent work at schools in which less than half of the student body are White.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	
	All Teachers (%)
GENDER	
Women	77
Men	23
AGE	
18–29	13
30–39	26
40–49	29
50–59	22
60 and over	10
RACE	
White	86
African American	7
Hispanic	6
Other	1

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS	
	All Teachers (%)
TYPE OF SCHOOL	
Pre-K/Elementary	49
Middle School or Junior High	24
High School	26
PERCENT OF STUDENT BODY ON FREE/ REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH	
Less than 30 percent	28
30 to 59 percent	38
60 percent or more	34
PERCENT OF STUDENT BODY WHO ARE WHITE	
Less than 50 percent	30
50 to 89 percent	41
90 percent or more	29
SCHOOL AREA	
City	33
Suburb	21
Small town	19
Rural	24
SCHOOL PERFORMANCE	
Low-performing school	26

APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON CASEL AND RESOURCES ON SEL IMPLEMENTATION

Since 1994, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been the world's leading organization to advance the science and evidence-based practice of social and emotional learning (SEL). CASEL has been at the forefront of defining the field of SEL and setting rigorous quality and professional standards. Through a coordinated set of strategies across practice, research, policy, and communications, the organization is currently engaging in a large-scale effort to make SEL an essential part of prekindergarten through twelfth grade education in the United States.

Based on strong scientific evidence about the impact of social and emotional factors on students' success in school, career, and life, CASEL supports districts in developing the capacity to incorporate high-quality, evidence-based SEL as an essential component of school improvement. Currently, CASEL's Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI) engages eight large school districts to plan, implement, and monitor systemic changes that will impact schools and classrooms in ways that influence students' social-emotional development and academic performance. CASEL's collaborating districts — Anchorage, Austin, Chicago, Cleveland, Nashville, Oakland, Sacramento, and Washoe County (NV) — serve more than 850,000 students in nearly 1,400 schools. CASEL consultants work with district administrators to support and school teams to plan and implement evidence-based SEL systematically. The collaborative work involves:

- Assessing the district's SEL-related needs and resources

- Developing a clear SEL vision and detailed long-term plans for SEL

- Developing and adopting SEL learning standards and assessments

- Adopting evidence-based SEL programs

- Designing professional development programs to build internal capacity

- Integrating SEL with existing district initiatives

- Aligning budgets and staffing to support SEL

- Monitoring SEL implementation process and outcomes

- Establishing a plan for communicating with stakeholders about SEL

- Participating in a cross-district evaluation and learning community with other districts

During this engagement, the partner districts are connected together, documenting and collectively sharing lessons learned. CASEL generates knowledge from the experience that can inform similar efforts in districts across the country.

The resources that follow can help you to:

Promote SEL at Home

- Download our *Parent Packet* for tips on how to promote SEL with your children at home and at school (http://casel.org/publications/sel-parent-packet-ideas-and-tools-for-working-with-parents-and-families-full-packet/).

- Read the *Raising Caring, Confident, Capable Children* brochure about SEL (http://casel.org/publications/raising-caring-confident-capable-children-brochure/).

- See the *SEL for Parents and Families* page for more parent resources (http://casel.org/in-schools/tools-for-families/).

- Find publications on social and emotional development in our *Publications Catalog* (http://casel.org/research/publications/).

Promote SEL in School

- Download the *2013 CASEL Guide on Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs: Preschool and Elementary School Edition* at http://casel.org/guide/. This guide identifies well-designed, evidence-based social and emotional learning programs with potential for broad dissemination to schools across the United States. Based on CASEL's work in research and practice spanning nearly two decades, we provide a systematic framework for evaluating the quality of classroom-based SEL programs. In addition, the *Guide* shares best practices for district and school teams on how to select and implement social and emotional learning programs.

- Learn more about the Collaborating Districts Initiative, wherein CASEL supports eight large school districts in building capacity for high-quality, evidence-based programming to promote social and emotional learning in preschool through twelfth grade (http://casel.org/collaborating-districts-initiative/).

- Download our PowerPoint Introduction to SEL, a tool from CASEL's *Implementation Guide and Toolkit.* This tool clearly and simply explains SEL and why it is important for children's school and life success. Complete with narrative notes for the presenter, it is designed to help explain SEL to teaching staff, boards of education, parents, and broader audiences (http://casel.org/publications/powerpoint-introduction-to-sel/ and http://casel.org/publications/sustainable-schoolwide-social-and-emotional-learning-sel-implementation-guide-and-toolkit/).

- Read and share the Illinois SEL brochure explaining why Illinois schools are adopting SEL (http://casel.org/publications/illinois-sel-brochure/).

- Read and share our short SEL background briefs: *What is SEL?* (http://casel.org/publications/what-is-sel/) and *Youth and Schools Today* (http://casel.org/publications/youth-and-schools-today/).

- Check http://casel.org for updates on CASEL's revamped SEL School Toolkit ("SchoolKit"). The SchoolKit is a guide and resource for school leadership teams to implement schoolwide academic, social, and emotional learning. It provides school leadership teams practical tools and systemic strategies to integrate SEL across all aspects of student learning in a caring and supportive school climate. The SchoolKit will be available in fall 2013.

- Read and share *Promoting Children's Ethical Development Through SEL* which describes a schoolwide SEL framework and one school's journey using this framework to promote its students' academic and social and emotional development (http://casel.org/publications/promoting-childrens-ethical-development-through-social-and-emotional-learning/).

- Read and share the book chapter, *Social and Emotional Learning,* by Zins, J.E. & Elias, M.J., for a concise summary of SEL — what it is, why it's needed, how it fits in with systems of supports for students, key components of effective SEL, and the implementation process (http://casel.org/publications/social-and-emotional-learning/).

- Read and share the article, *Reimagining Education,* by O'Brien, M.U., Weissberg, R.P., & Munro, S.B., for a vision of education at its best (http://casel.org/publications/reimagining-education-in-our-dream-social-and-emotional-learning—or-sel—is-a-household-term/).

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