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Regional Career Pathways Link SEL to Career and Workforce Development

The Coalition for Career Development Center is committed to highlighting research-based career development activities for diverse audiences. This case study is one of three describing the development and implementation of social and emotional learning (SEL) integrated with career and workforce development efforts in Delaware, Kansas, and Wisconsin.



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WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
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“SEL is an important component for meeting the needs of every child. What we know is that when we meet the needs of the whole child, from cradle through college, we are setting them up, as well as our communities, our workplaces, and our families, for future success.”

~ Dr. Jill Underly,
Wisconsin State Superintendent of Public Instruction



Through strategic investments in four elements of education— social and emotional learning (SEL), Academic and Career Planning (ACP), work-based learning (WBL), and career and technical education (CTE)—Wisconsin sets the stage for the successful integration of SEL and career and workforce development. In 2018, the state began serious work to integrate these elements in an equitable way to establish a comprehensive system for all students. Prioritizing coordination, Wisconsin pursued this work “to ensure that every child, regardless of zip code, has access to quality public education programs, enrichment opportunities, and special education support...”

In addition to establishing internal collaborations across state teams and agencies (e.g., Student Services/Prevention and Wellness [SSPW]), the state was further supported by external partnerships to enhance comprehensive career pathways in ACP through participation in [J.P. Morgan Chase’s New Skills for Youth grant](#), [CASEL’s Collaborating States Initiative](#) (CSI), and the [Coalition for Career Development Center’s State Leaders Career Development Network](#). Wisconsin exemplifies a comprehensive and coordinated approach to education policy that integrates SEL with ACP, WBL, and CTE successfully.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Definition: SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. SEL addresses five core competencies: self-awareness, social awareness, self management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020).

Connections to Career and Workforce Development: A meta-analysis of SEL interventions verified the positive impact of developing social and emotional skills on a range of academic outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011), including navigating and negotiating interpersonal activities in ways that help students achieve positive life outcomes (Taylor et al., 2017).

Social and emotional skills also serve as “deeper human skills” (Lim-Lange & Lim-Lange, 2019; Yoder, et al., 2020) that are critical to successfully engaging in occupations affected by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Schwab, 2017). Cappelli and Tavis (2018) argue that in order to become prepared to successfully enter this new world of work, children and youth need to develop a combination of strong “human skills” (i.e., social and emotional learning skills, resiliency, etc.), technical and computational skills, and career management skills (i.e., learning how to align learning to pursue future goals). Moreover, an analysis of employer surveys and job listings revealed that the skills employers cited as the most in-demand are directly underpinned by SEL competencies (Yoder et al., 2020).

According to the Coalition for Career Development Center, career development is “a process that informs individuals about career opportunities, helps them identify their talent, become aware of how their talent transfers into a wide range of occupational opportunities, and enables them to make effective decisions on the academic and postsecondary pathways that will enable them to pursue their career and life goals” (Coalition for Career Development Center, 2021). Adopting this definition, CASEL and this publication use the term “career and workforce development” to capture the diversity of taxonomies employed by states to describe this process and the efforts that support it.

Wisconsin's shared vision for SEL began with strong partnerships as a function of the Department of Public Instruction's (DPI) prioritization for internal and external collaboration. A state-level collaboration team convened to advise Safe Schools Healthy Students Federal grant planning initially identified the need for developmentally appropriate SEL skill benchmarks.

Expanding on the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) and Social and Emotional Learning Standards developed by the Madison Metropolitan School District, the state SEL workgroup, led by DPI's SSPW team, created a developmental growth model of skills. This work was done in consultation with external partners from professional services organizations, teacher focus groups, community partners, and staff at other state agencies.

Wisconsin's early commitment to SEL led to participation as one of the first members of [CASEL's CSI](#). Launched in 2016, the CSI works with states and school districts to help create policy conditions that ensure that preschool to high school students are fully prepared—academically, socially, and emotionally—to succeed in school, at work, and in life.

In the early stages of their work, the SSPW team reached out internally to other teams that were pursuing related projects at DPI. Through this engagement, SSPW learned more deeply about ongoing work related to ACP, CTE, Special Education, and Equitable Multi-Level Systems of Support, which led to the discovery of shared goals across these initiatives. The teams driving these initiatives also discovered that collective action around SEL could support the success of their own efforts.

Led by this spirit of collaboration, the SSPW team connected to existing external partners of the CTE and ACP teams. These additional collaborations, specifically the regional career pathways work that occurred under the J.P. Morgan Chase New Skills for Youth (NSFY) grant (2017-19) led by the ACP and CTE teams (see Career Pathways below), supported SEL and workforce integration.

Furthermore, multiple public reviews of the state SEL framework and skills created an iterative revision process that produced the comprehensive, developmental progression of the Wisconsin social and emotional skills.



The Wisconsin DPI is committed to ensuring it meets the needs of all students. Regardless of zip code, every child deserves access to high-quality public education programs that work, such as early childhood programming, mental health and school nursing support, and well-funded schools. When SEL is integrated into all educational environments, it acts as a critical step in achieving the mission of the department. **When the needs of the whole child are met, from cradle through college, students are set up for future success.**

External and internal focus groups were conducted with other agencies, such as the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, school staff with diverse roles, and out-of-school time service providers, to define areas in current practices that could benefit from SEL integration.

The SSPW team's foundational SEL efforts match the recommendations provided by the CASEL CSI Developmental Framework for Integration of SEL and Career and Workforce Development (**Figure 1**).

By beginning with the current Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards, the team aligned the Wisconsin SEL policy and implementation framework with key priorities that include college and career readiness, mental health, school climate, and positive behavioral interventions support (PBIS). In building on current work, Wisconsin fostered educator buy-in without 'reinventing the wheel.'

Framework for SEL integration with career and workforce development

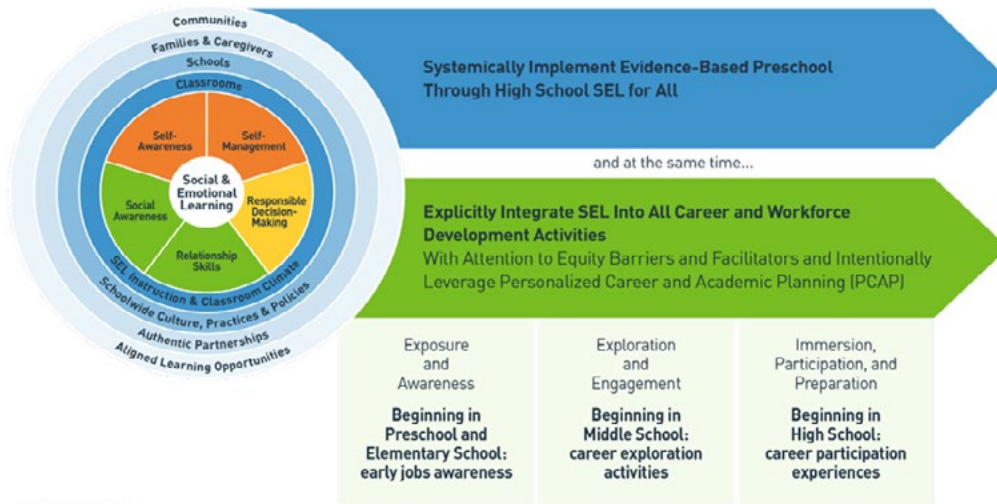


Figure 1: CASEL CSI Developmental Framework for Integration of SEL and Career and Workforce Development

The CASEL CSI Developmental Framework for Integration of SEL and Career and Workforce Development (**Figure 1**) aims to assist all states seeking to systemically integrate evidence-based SEL with career and workforce development efforts. CASEL, the Coalition for Career Development, and CIVIC collaborated with eight states (Delaware, Kansas, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah, Wisconsin) to create this framework such that states can support districts and schools in their efforts to prepare students for postsecondary success.

Consistent with the CASEL framework for SEL (2020), the foundation of the framework is the systemic implementation of SEL for all students and adults with evidence-based SEL programs and practices at the foundation (blue arrow).

Grounded by this systemic implementation, the framework recommends that SEL be explicitly and comprehensively integrated into all career and workforce development efforts (green arrow).

Moreover, the framework recommends that those integrating SEL into career and workforce development efforts address obstacles that create disparities (e.g., equity barriers), employ strategies that foster access (e.g., equity facilitators), be culturally responsive, and customize student experiences (e.g., existing or emerging systems of Personalized Career and Academic Planning [PCAP]). This framework is informed by the three developmental stages of occupational identity formation (light green boxes): exposure and awareness; exploration and engagement; and immersion, participation, and preparation (Callahan et al., 2019).

More information on this framework can be found in CASEL's brief on [the Developmental Framework](#) (Dermody et al., 2022). To continue to support the integration of SEL and CWD, visit the [Additional Tools and Resources](#) section on [CASEL's SEL and Career and Workforce Development Initiative Page](#).





Figure 2. Wisconsin-CASEL Aligned Framework

The three domains of the Wisconsin model (**Figure 2**) (i.e., emotional development, self-concept, social competence) provide the conceptual framework for the PreK-adult competencies. The five CASEL core competencies of self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, decision-making, and relationship skills (as seen in Figure 1) are all contained within these three domains.

The competencies are structured in developmental grade bands, as each competency subsumes the knowledge and skill development of the previous competencies, and are clustered in levels of 4K-5K, 1-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-10, and 11-adulthood. While the grade bands provide a framework for student development and understanding, many students may not yet be performing these skills in their enrolled grade; however, the developmental chart allows the educator to assess the child's current, approximate level of functioning and identify strategies to guide them to the next developmental level.

Presenting the competencies on a developmental continuum is deliberate and encourages schools and districts to view SEL development as a mental health promotion strategy rather than a behavioral intervention. This focus on a comprehensive developmental SEL program is to improve student and adult competency rather than on compliance.

Schools and districts across Wisconsin are implementing SEL systemically and integrating it with existing programs and initiatives, key elements in the CASEL CSI Framework (**Figure 1**). The SSPW team encouraged schools to embrace alignment of SEL across systems, noting the approach is more effective if SEL could be aligned with other programs and practices. [Sharing CASEL's lessons for advancing systemic SEL](#), the SSPW team

provided schools with a variety of resources, preserving local district choice, to support SEL planning and implementation extending beyond the classroom and include active participation of diverse stakeholders throughout the school, district, community, and out-of-school time programs.

In addition, schools and community programs are invited to provide research-in-action projects through local case studies, vetted by the SSPW team, for showcases in the state SEL community.

To further cement Wisconsin's SEL competencies beyond K-12, and in line with the CASEL CSI framework (**Figure 1**), the developmental continuum extends from grade 11 through adulthood with the support of Wisconsin's Department of Workforce Development (DWD). The [DWD's Skill Explorer](#) tool notes specific occupational traits and social and emotional skills employees will need for specific jobs. This tool was built using publicly available information from the U.S. Department of Labor's O*NET database under each occupation's "skills," "abilities," and "work values" sections. Wisconsin has been able to advance its commitment to leveraging SEL to promote postsecondary success in recent years as part of the CASEL's CSI SEL and Workforce Community of Practice.

Bret Iverson, Dragon Learning Center Coordinator, Siren School District, offers an after-school program for preK to grade 12 students to participate at no cost four days a week in academic support and enrichment activities. SEL connections were highlighted recently in self-awareness and social awareness through a scavenger hunt and Q&A period with industry leaders as part of a half-day field trip. Students interview leaders and ask about their career area and what is needed to be successful in their industry. Planning begins ahead of time, preparing students on dress, behavior, expectations, with a reflection summary after the event.



In another collaborative effort, DPI and the University of Wisconsin developed a [SEL Professional Development](#) system that provides research-based survey tools designed to help schools recognize how they can improve SEL, teaching, and professional development in their schools. This collaboration also produced free family resources for schools, [Raising Caring Kids](#), to use for family communication and advocacy.



Wisconsin’s commitment to SEL was recognized in two recent CASEL reports ([Dusenbury et al., 2020](#); [Yoder et al., 2020](#)), which noted the state’s extensive, well-developed, research-based resources to support schools, staff, and workforce professionals, including guidance on implementation, assessment tools, and professional development. Of particular interest to CASEL was the unique approach DPI took with SEL curriculum. Curriculum vendors were invited to submit documentation and webinars on

how their evidence-based products aligned specifically to Wisconsin’s SEL competencies and framework. This approach and information allowed school districts to make informed choices as to which curricular programs to use, rather than the state choosing for them.

In sum, Wisconsin’s commitment to systemic SEL now serves as the strong foundation for SEL integration into DPI’s Equity Plan, ACP, CTE, career pathways, and workforce development efforts. Because Wisconsin understood the importance of SEL for student success, the state has emerged as a leader in integrating SEL into academics and workforce development.

According to CASEL ([Mahoney et al., 2020](#)): “Wisconsin developed a **comprehensive, developmental SEL framework aligned with academics and other [agency] priorities** including college and career readiness, mental health, school climate, and PBIS. Wisconsin has an ongoing partnership with CASEL to understand how systemic SEL influences professional learning, curriculum and instruction, implementation, and continuous improvement” (pg. 5). By conceptualizing SEL as a catalyst for multiple DPI initiatives from the outset, Wisconsin now acts as an exemplar for how systemic implementation of SEL enhances its integration into career and workforce development efforts.



SEL Resources

- [Wisconsin's SEL web pages](#) provide access to the state's extensive and nationally recognized resources to support schools, staff, and workforce professionals, including guidance on implementation, assessment tools, and professional development.
- [Wisconsin's SEL Framework](#) started with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards, (WMELS), and aligns policy and implementation with key priorities that include college and career readiness, mental health, school climate, and PBIS.
- The SEL [competencies](#) are presented in grade bands: 4k-5k, 1-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-10, 11-Adult, developmentally moving from the early learning standards.
- [Wisconsin's SEL toolkit](#) offers a list of comprehensive resources for schools and community-based organizations interested in adopting SEL practices.
- Wisconsin-specific [SEL competency crosswalks](#) are submitted by SEL vendors aligning their products specifically to Wisconsin's SEL competencies and framework.
- [Request SEL technical assistance and a sign-up for email list subscription](#) to get important SEL communications.
- Multiple practical educator tools and [district case studies](#) help integrate and implement social and emotional learning with existing programs and initiatives.
- [Advancing Equity through Social and Emotional Learning](#) strategies document describes A focus on equity occurs through direct participation on the State Superintendent's Equity Council.
- SEL [Professional Development and Training](#) page offers specific SEL support for educators and leaders.
- [Wisconsin's Guide to SEL and Workforce Readiness: A Powerful Combination](#) is a resource for educators and adults interested implementing comprehensive social and emotional learning for youth aligned with career and workforce development.
- [Wisconsin's SEL and Career and Technical Education Employability Standards Crosswalk](#) documents and describes the alignment between Wisconsin's social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies and Wisconsin Employability Skill Standards.
- An [SEL Professional Development](#) system, developed in partnerships between DPI and the University of Wisconsin, provides survey tools designed to help schools recognize how they can improve SEL, teaching, and professional development in their schools.
- [Raising Caring Kids](#) offers free family resources for schools developed through the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- [DWD's Skill Explorer tool](#) notes specific occupational traits and social and emotional skills employees will need for specific jobs.
- [CASEL CSI Developmental Framework](#) for Integration of SEL and Career and Workforce Development provides a structure and justification for supporting these two key initiatives through aligned efforts.

Personalized Career and Academic Plans (PCAP)

Definition:

PCAPs, also generically referred to as individualized learning plans (ILPs), are both a document and a process students use to learn about themselves, explore the world of work, and identify their career goals. PCAPs inform decisions about students' courses and activities throughout school and help them create postsecondary plans. Supportive adults, such as school counselors, teachers, parents, and community members participate in the process, offering feedback and guiding students through the process (Solberg et al., 2018).

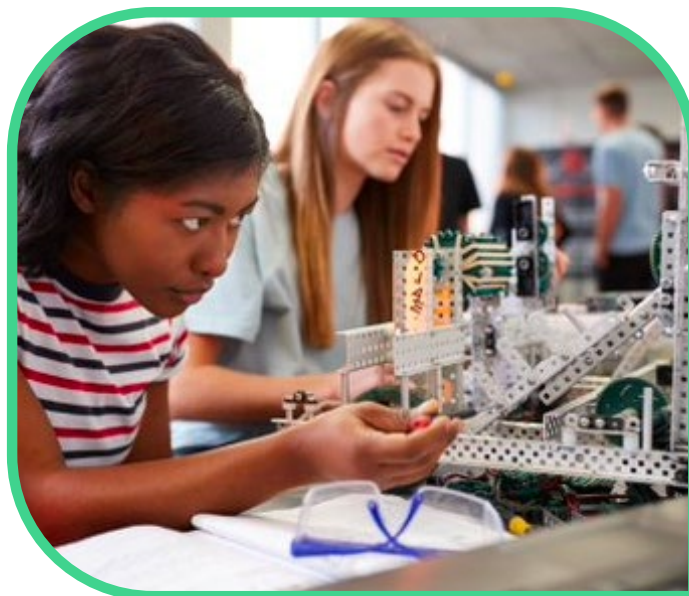
Connections to Career and Workforce Development and SEL: Many states have adopted their own terms for these plans and processes and created policies to guide schools in the implementation of the PCAP process; some even require all middle and/or high school students to develop and maintain PCAPs in order to make schools more personalized and improve student outcomes.

When integrated with SEL, the PCAP process supports youth in understanding a set of career and workforce opportunities (social awareness), determining their own talents and interests (self-awareness), planning for and setting goals (self-management), pursuing steps to experience career and workforce opportunities (responsible decision-making), and seeking help from others and establishing relationships with mentors to advance goals (relationship-management) (CASEL, 2020; Coalition for Career Development Center, 2021).

The CASEL CSI Developmental Framework (**Figure 1**) recommends customizing student's experiences of SEL within career and workforce development experiences functionally and organizationally through PCAPs— both to provide students with an opportunity to practice their social and emotional skills and to ensure the integration of SEL into all activities across the developmental continuum.

In 2017, Wisconsin schools officially launched their PCAP process, called ACP, for all students in grades 6-12. Originating from a bipartisan legislative mandate with funding to engage in career development planning, training, and communications, ACP development and required implementation was co-led by the Wisconsin DPI divisions for CTE and SSPW.

During the design process, the collaborative ACP team established an advisory group in 2014, with representation from multiple internal and external stakeholders to ensure alignment between ACP and key student academic and development initiatives. External stakeholders, including schools, districts, regional collaborative educational service agencies, business, career and workforce development, and higher education, helped develop the ACP in addition to those directly related to the field of school counseling, CTE, special education, and academics.



By the time schools were required to implement ACP in 2017, state funding supported ACP training. This was in addition to the procurement and implementation of a statewide software platform to be used for the ACP process for career awareness, exploration, and planning by all students in grades 6-12. The software platform, Xello, was accessible in 98.5 percent of school districts. Employing one primary state ACP platform ensured schools have common training and technical support for ACP activities, along with the flexibility to adjust curricular requirements for career development activities based on local needs. The ACP implementation was successful because the software platform was promoted as a tool to aid, not replace, career development for students.

Since the SSPW and CTE teams co-led the ACP effort, the inherent connection of ACP career development to SEL was obvious when SSPW began designing the SEL framework in 2017. From the outset, resources and communication materials described the ACP process as a means to provide a stronger, connected, whole-school process for school staff to support students as they transitioned from grade to grade and after graduation. Continuing in the spirit of whole-school collaboration, materials for both ACP and SEL school planning align to encourage multiple school staff roles for planning and im-

plementation to foster efficiencies.

Thus, the [Wisconsin ACP](#) process has prioritized SEL as one of three methods of supporting whole child development through its implementation (**Figure 3**):

- Academic development through access to a relevant and connected academic sequence of courses, dual college credit, and increasing course rigor;
- Career development through access to career-based learning experiences, work-based learning programs, industry-recognized certifications, and CTE Student Organization participation; and
- Social and emotional development through access to opportunities to practice social and emotional skills in class and real-world settings and embedded into instructional practices.



Figure 3. ACP Process for Career Readiness

The CASEL CSI Developmental Framework for Integration of SEL and Career and Workforce Development (**Figure 1**) recommends utilizing personalized career and academic planning to support the integration of SEL. By promoting the importance of SEL instruction and active practice as a key method to prepare students for post-secondary success in their ACP process, Wisconsin does just this. Importantly, Xello, the statewide ACP software platform vendor, aligned its specific in-program activities, missions, lessons, and supplementary activities with the SEL competencies identified by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). In addition, the department created the [ACP Implementation: District Self-Assessment](#) tool to guide districts in creating an ACP Portrait of a Graduate that reflects SEL (Smith, 2021).

Moreover, to support the successful use of ACP and integration with SEL, Wisconsin created the ACP Community of Practice (CoP) to provide regional professional development on related ACP topics and showcase exemplar districts in collaboration with their cooperative education service agencies (CESAs), technical colleges, and state staff. This community of practice supports SEL integration by ensuring career development connections with SEL competencies in the classroom, through career development ACP activities and out-of-school time programming.



ACP Resources:

- [Wisconsin ACP website](#) provides resources for students, families, and educators for Academic and Career Planning.
- The [ACP Flyer](#) indicates a whole-school, whole child approach integrating SEL, CTE, and work-based learning (WBL).
- [ACP Implementation: District Self Assessment](#) offers a strategic tool for supporting ACP through continuous improvement.
- The new [ACP Community of Practice](#) provides a landing page with links to the monthly topics and session recordings for future reference, including the April 2021 presentation on [ACP and Social and Emotional Learning](#).
- Wisconsin [ACP Research Findings and Tools](#) webpage highlights ongoing research-based findings since the beginning of implementation.
- The ACP [Technology Platform](#) page connects to important information about the state-provided software system for ACP.
- Wisconsin [comprehensive school counseling programs](#) support the implementation of ACP within schools and districts.
- Link directly to [ACP](#) for career development and [ACP Community of Practice](#).

Work-Based Learning (WBL) and Early College Access

Definition:

WBL is defined as “sustained interactions with industry or community professionals in real workplace settings ... or simulated environments at an educational institution that foster in-depth, firsthand engagement with the tasks required in a given career field” (Perkins V). In general, schools refer to WBL as a wide variety of school-supervised, career and workforce development activities that range from career fairs and job shadows to paid internships and apprenticeships.

Connections to Career and Workforce Development and SEL:

WBL is essential for student’s occupational identity formation, including their awareness of different types of careers, their engagement in exploring those careers, and their active immersion in activities associated with those careers (Callahan et al., 2019). This experiential learning provides students with a firsthand look at how school-based learning is relevant to a variety of career options.

In addition, WBL allows students to practice and apply social and emotional skills (e.g., social awareness and relationships skills) developed in K-12 classroom settings in new environments, at a workplace, or in partnership with business mentors. WBL opportunities can also be harnessed as a method of teaching social and emotional skills within the environment of a specific career. This practice contextualizes how social and emotional skills are critical for success in the world of work.

For all career and workforce activities, including WBL, the CASEL CSI Developmental Framework (**Figure 1**) recommends that social and emotional skills be integrated through (1) the organization of direct SEL instruction during these activities and (2) the utilization of these experiences as opportunities for practicing emerging social and emotional skills. In addition, the framework recommends the use of PCAPs to help youth identify future goals and explore the WBL opportunities that will help them pursue those goals.

Wisconsin offers multiple career exploration activities and WBL program opportunities jointly through DPI and the DWD. Resources are provided for both schools and employers to prepare for and offer quality WBL programming.

One of the first states to offer Youth Apprenticeship (YA) programming in the 1990s, both DWD and DPI utilized federal and state funding over the years to outline quality programming and state certification requirements for standard WBL programs. In 2012, DWD and DPI updated the state youth work permit manual into a guide, now a series of webpages [Employment of Minors Information](#) that provide schools, students, and employers with information on wages and child labor law language in understandable terms.

In 2015, the state ACP software platform, Xello, was integrated to begin working with regional economic development organizations to act as an intermediary platform to connect students to potential WBL employers directly through their ACP activities. As a result, [Inspire Wisconsin](#) is now available as an integrated ACP-employer-student portal accessed through the student's own ACP account. Students can explore companies, connected careers, and work-based learning opportunities directly with over 1500 employers statewide.

In 2017, with a grant from J.P. Morgan Chase NSFY, Wisconsin further defined and delineated the range of career experiential programming for schools, students, and employer mentors to include a wide variety of resources. The [Wisconsin Guide to Implementing Career-Based Learning Experiences](#) assists stakeholders to understand the variety of WBL options, child labor and school legal information, and different program requirements so that all students can access and engage in career experiences as part of their personal ACP programming. In addition, a [resources for employers](#) offer guidelines for hosting students for various experiences that are SEL-informed. During the out-of-school COVID period, a [Virtual Job Spotlight](#) offered a guide for intermediaries, schools, or other organizations to continue to offer WBL in virtual settings.

WBL opportunities are supported by other state agencies to assist schools with career and workforce development for specific populations or initiatives. Through the economic development regions, the Department of Children and Families foster youth initiatives. Similarly, DWD's career pathway work with youth apprenticeship, adults with disabilities, and registered apprenticeship, representatives from DPI, and DWD youth WBL programming are on hand to ensure collaborative efficiencies. Staff are consulted or participate at the state or regional levels whenever specific youth WBL programming is addressed.

Two of Wisconsin's WBL state certification programs that illustrate this inter-departmental collaboration are YA and the Employability Skills certification. DWD manages the YA programs, which connect students in participating districts with employer partners in specific work settings related to the YA program. These YA programs include mentorship opportunities for students to learn the technical and interpersonal skills needed for success in the workplace. DPI manages the state's Employability Skills program, which coordinates and recognizes student's mastery of skills valued by employers in a variety of work settings.

Wisconsin recognizes that students will not be fully prepared in the upper high school grades for immersive WBL experiences unless they possess quality social and emotional skills. To make the implicit connection between the goals of SEL and the goals of these WBL programs explicit, DPI and DWD now align the state WBL programs in YA and the Employability Skills program [to the state SEL competencies for the grade 11-adult band](#),



as well as co-enroll YA students into the Employability Skills certificate. Connection and co-enrollment allow students to earn both of these SEL-workforce connected certifications, demonstrating workforce preparedness. In addition, the state has created a [crosswalk of SEL and Employability Standards](#) to be integrated into all WBL programming. DPI and DWD continue to seek options for connections and coordination between WBL, CTE, and SEL. Moreover, the state has recently published its [Guide to Social and Emotional Learning and Workforce Readiness](#) report, which is designed to support everyone in the education system to understand, support, and implement strong connections between SEL competencies and workforce readiness skills.

Wisconsin also recognizes and actively promotes multiple early college access efforts explicitly as part of ACP through their Regional Career Pathways programming (see more on Career Pathways below). YA, dual college enrollment courses, and co-enrolled high school-technical college programming are highlighted through state and regional career pathway maps to communicate opportunities for WBL and dual college enrollment, in addition to traditional offerings in Advance Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses.

Wisconsin's long history of success with WBL has made it possible to (i) highlight this career development activity as a critical one for students to access during the ACP process, and (ii) integrate SEL into these WBL experiences seamlessly. Moreover, WBL is now captured in the state's DPI accountability system and was submitted as the indicator for CTE secondary accountability in Wisconsin's Perkins V State plan.



WBL and Early College Access Resources:

- [Wisconsin Guide to Implementing Career-Based Learning Experiences](#) offers directions to ensure schools count every student participating in a WBL program that meets quality criteria regardless of CTE status.
- [Wisconsin's Guide to SEL and Workforce Readiness: A Powerful Combination](#) is a resource for educators and adults interested implementing comprehensive social and emotional learning for youth aligned with career and workforce development.
- All Wisconsin DWD YA programs and the DPI Employability Skills certification are [aligned to each other and to SEL competencies](#).
- A [Virtual Job Spotlight](#) offers a guide for intermediaries, schools, or other organizations.
- [Employment of Minors](#) Information, provided by the Department of Workforce Development for schools, students, and employers, describes child labor law language in understandable terms.
- [Inspire Wisconsin](#) is a statewide integrated ACP-employer-student portal. The integrated platform reaches students through their ACP software accounts in over 98 percent of school districts. Students can explore companies, connected careers, and WBL opportunities directly with over 1500 employers statewide.
- The [Dual Enrollment in Wisconsin](#) page connects educators and families to the variety of methods to access college credit while in high school, as well as definitions for required district accountability reporting.

Career pathways

Definition:

A career pathway is “a sequence of learning experiences that span secondary and postsecondary systems, blend rigorous core academic and career technical instruction, offer focused career guidance and advisement systems, include high-quality WBL experiences, and culminate in postsecondary or industry credentials of value” (Advance CTE). In general, a career pathway outlines the on- and off-ramps from education, training, and certifications to successive occupations in a career ladder.

Connections to Career and Workforce Development and SEL:

A career pathway is for ALL students; not just students enrolled in formal CTE programs. Accessing a career pathway allows students to follow their career interests (uncovered through a quality K-12 PCAP process) and explore and prepare for adult transitions while still in high school.

When intentionally integrated with SEL, the ‘pathway’ approach sets students on an informed trajectory to accomplish personal career goals. In this process, students develop and engage their social and emotional skills (e.g., self-awareness and responsible decision-making) to reflect upon their career interests and actively pursue those careers. Career pathways encourage students to take advantage of dual college credit and WBL opportunities, earning industry-recognized credentials as they continue to develop the social and emotional skills valued in workplace settings.

The CASEL CSI Developmental Framework (**Figure 1**) aligns with the structure defined by career pathways in a way that fosters seamless SEL integration. Supported by the PCAP process, the CSI framework advances the social and emotional skills (e.g., self-awareness and responsible decision-making) that help students experience the opportunities offered by a pathways approach in a meaningful way.



In 2017, Wisconsin was one of 10 states awarded a J.P. Morgan Chase NSFY grant. For the next two years, the state used this grant funding to develop “Regional Career Pathways,” a regional intermediary model for industry sector career ladders in four pilot regions. Through this initiative, employers, educators, and economic and workforce professionals identified, developed, and localized career pathways in high-skill, in-demand industries.

The state utilized the following process for creation of the Regional Career Pathways pilot. Supported by labor market data, state- and regional-level employers and employer associations identified desired entry-level skill sets (e.g., academic, technical, employability, and SEL) and credentials for occupations. These skills and credentials were then crafted into industry-specific and region-specific career ladders, which elevated the voices of employers. Through partnerships with regional higher education institutions, career and workforce development initiatives, and economic development, ready-made ACP plans (i.e., Regional Pathway Maps) were created to highlight the variety of options available to students after graduation through these career ladders.

The Regional Pathways maps include information on the local high school courses, non-duplicative dual college enrollment courses, quality industry-recognized credentials, and WBL options available to get started on career exploration, planning, and entrance into the postsecondary option that aligns with the student’s ACP goals. The map provides students and families with information about how to prepare in high school and navigate into and out of the postsecondary education and training process to advance on career ladders.

The work under this grant resulted in the following accomplishments:

1. The development of industry sector Regional [Career Pathways](#) in Advanced Manufacturing, Business Administration, Construction, Healthcare, Digital Technology, and Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math (STEM)-Energy with state level employer teams. These were made avail-

able through professional development of school ACP, CTE, and school counseling staff.

2. The inclusion of more than 900 employer partners in the development of the state's Regional Career Pathways.
3. The development of an educator focused [biannual state labor market information \(LMI\) report](#) created in partnership with the Wisconsin DWD and available for ACP student discussions.
4. An expanded update of the state's K-12 educational accountability system to include collection of the following career readiness indicators on ALL students regardless of career and technical education status.
 - a. WBL program participation
 - b. Industry Recognized Credentials completion
 - c. Dual College Enrollment participation and completion
 - d. AP and IB participation and completion

In 2019 and 2020, Regional Career Pathways grew to all regions of the state.

This growth was due to strategic utilization of federal Perkins reserve funding to reach all 421 school districts through partnership agreements. This effort was jointly led by economic development staff and employers and the K-12 Cooperative Education Service Agencies (CESA) groups along with higher education entities, workforce investment boards, and others in each region, known as "collaboratives." Each Regional Career Pathway collaborative addresses methods of pathway build-



ing and evaluating the high-skill, in-demand regional career ladders for their high schools to connect directly with higher education and training entities. In the process, the collaborative also acts as an advisory group to identify and overcome equity barriers that may prevent students from accessing a pathway (e.g., college curriculum that is not aligned with the career pathway), an essential element for promoting equity (see the CASEL CSI Developmental Framework for Integration of SEL and Career and Workforce Development, **Figure 1**).

The 'pathway' approach sets students on an informed trajectory to accomplish career goals developed during the ACP process.

The opportunities highlighted in a formal career pathway may be adopted by the region or created as part of a local pathway developed by the school. Importantly, all Regional Career Pathways build on earlier SEL student growth so students practice social and emotional skills while experiencing WBL opportunities, studying for dual college credit, or earning industry-recognized credentials.

Wisconsin used what was learned through the development of the ACP process, J.P. Morgan NSFY grant process, and the requirements in the reauthorized Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) to position and strengthen adoption of Regional Career Pathways as career preparation through ACP. This model was received so positively that the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment (CWI) submitted a [budget proposal \(pages 3-5\)](#) for consideration in the 2021-2023 state budget. While the requested funding was not included in the 2021-2023 state budget, the CWI continues to support regional career pathways as a workforce development strategy and has invited the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to participate in the development of the 2022-2026 CWI Strategic Plan.



Career Pathway Resources:

- Wisconsin's [Regional Career Pathways](#) website offers information and resources related to the state-developed pathways approach.
- This [map of state regional career pathway collaboratives](#) is aligned to economic development regions.
- Current, state-approved Regional Career Pathways in [high-skill, high-growth industry sectors](#) are ready to be adopted by local schools and alleviate the burden to develop local pathways for CTE federal Perkins requirements.
 - Sample State-endorsed regional career pathway map: [Healthcare sector](#); [Map Template](#); [Map Guide](#).
- [Labor Market Information](#) (LMI) is compiled with the Wisconsin DWD for educators through a [biannual guide](#).
- Regional Career Pathways are partially funded through the state's [Perkins reserve grant](#).

Integration Highlights

Wisconsin has committed to integrating SEL with career and workforce development from the start, and, in the true spirit of continuous improvement, pursues growth and opportunities to further this goal.

As indicated above, the state's rich investments in SEL and career and workforce development initiatives have provided many opportunities for integration. A few examples include:



SEL Framework and Competencies

- Wisconsin is recognized as an SEL leader for developing “a comprehensive, developmental SEL framework aligned with academics and other [agency] priorities including college and career readiness, mental health, school climate, and PBIS” ([Mahoney et al., 2020](#)).
- [Wisconsin’s SEL Framework](#) started with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) and aligns policy and implementation with the agencies’ key priorities.
- [Wisconsin’s SEL toolkit](#) offers a list of comprehensive resources for schools and community-based organizations interested in adopting SEL practices.
- SEL vendors are invited to align their [curriculum](#) and [assessments](#) directly to Wisconsin’s SEL framework allowing local districts to make informed choices.
- Local district case studies highlight local examples of [SEL implementation](#) and [out-of-school time programs](#).
- Wisconsin’s upper high school SEL competencies extend from grade 11 through adulthood, which the DWD supports and endorses.
- [DWD’s Skill Explorer tool](#) notes specific occupational traits and social and emotional skills employees will need for specific jobs. This tool was built using publicly available information from the U.S. Department of Labor’s O*NET database under each occupation’s “skills,” “abilities,” and “work values” sections.

SEL and Academic and Career Planning

- The [ACP COP](#) provides opportunities to network and share problems of

practice as well as professional development on a variety of integrated topics. The landing page holds links to the monthly topics and session recordings for future reference, including the April 2021 presentation on [ACP and SEL](#).

- The statewide ACP software platform vendor aligned its specific in-program activities, missions, lessons, and supplementary activities to align with the SEL competencies identified by the Wisconsin DPI to include the following:
 - [Xello Supports Wisconsin's SEL Competencies](#)
 - [Supporting Career Readiness in Out-of-School Time Programs](#) Webinar
 - [Using Xello to Support Career Readiness in After-School Programs](#) Webinar

SEL, WBL, and Early College

- The [Wisconsin Guide to Implementing Career-Based Learning Experiences](#) outlines the variety of WBL options, child labor, school legal information, and different program requirements so that all students can access and engage in career experiences as part of their personal ACP programming.
- All students in DWD YA programs are co-enrolled into the state's Employability Skills certification program.
- All Wisconsin DWD YA programs and the DPI State Certified Employability Skills certification are [aligned to each other and to SEL competencies](#).
- Wisconsin's Regional Career Pathways engage all high school students to consider WBL opportunities available under ACP, including YA and pre- and first-year registered apprenticeships.
- WBL opportunities are supported by other state agencies through the economic development regions, Department of Children and Families foster youth initiatives, and DWD's career pathway work with youth apprenticeship, adults with disabilities, and registered apprenticeship.

SEL, Academic Success, and Career and Workforce Development

- [Regional career pathway industry sector maps](#), based on labor market data, are developed with state and regional employers and employer associations to identify entry-level academic, technical, employability, and SEL skill sets.
- Charts that will show the alignment of the Wisconsin SEL competencies to those similar skills in CTE standards, the Youth Leadership Skill Standards program, the Global Competencies certificate and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) are under development.
- All Wisconsin DWD YA programs and the DPI State Certified Employability Skills certification are [aligned to each other and to SEL competencies](#).

Wisconsin Educational Funding

To support districts in advancing this important work, Wisconsin's education teams explore multiple funding sources to facilitate SEL and career and workforce development integration. In particular, the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment ([CWI](#)), comprised of stakeholders from education, workforce development, business, and government, supports Wisconsin employers in finding the workers they need and providing resources to enable workers to access training for in-demand careers with the ultimate goals of moving Wisconsin's economy forward and supporting a highly skilled labor force.

Federal (ESSA, WIOA, Perkins, REL, Comprehensive Centers, ESSER) funds:

- Perkins V Allocations ([Wisconsin Perkins V State Plan](#))
 - o Local school district career and technical education (CTE) Perkins funding is distributed through application based on formula amounts to implement and maintain career pathways that meet size, scope, and quality. Quality pathway requirements now include the same pathway components identified under the J.P. Morgan Chase NSFY grant and regionalized statewide.
 - o State K-12 Perkins [reserve funding](#) is now used to support the implementation of the regional career pathways collaborative intermediaries in every part of the state.
 - o Postsecondary CTE Perkins reserve funding supports the state's 16 technical colleges, including career preparation for improving and developing dual enrollment opportunities for the high schools within a college's district. These coordinators are critical partners to Wisconsin's DPI and DWD for career and SEL development.
- ESSA Title 4a funds support a well-rounded education. Local school districts are able to leverage funding from their Title IVA fund to support the implementation of SEL.

State General Funds:

- The K-12 Regional Career Pathways integrated intermediary model was received so positively that the [CWI](#) submitted a [budget proposal \(pages 3-5\)](#) for consideration in the 2021-2023 state budget
- While the COVID pandemic prevented state funding allocation for that specific purpose, DPI continues to address SEL with the [COVID relief funding](#) in early childhood education, summer programming, digital literacy, and more. Specifically in out-of-school time programming and environ-

mental education: “Access to the outdoor spaces and activities that integrate SEL, mindfulness...” and “providing [out-of-school time] staff with training related to SEL for out of school programs” ([COVID Response and Relief Planning Recommendations, Well-Rounded Education](#)).

- DWD’s annual YA program funding is spent on coordinating academic, vocational, and occupational learning, school-based and work-based learning, and secondary and postsecondary education preparation for participants in the local youth apprenticeship program, including SEL readiness.
- Annual ACP funding allows spending on guidance, training, and technical assistance to school districts and school district staff, including teachers and counselors, on how to implement model academic and career plans, which includes integrating SEL programming into employability preparation.
- School districts can draw funds from the [CTE Technical Incentive Grants](#) based on the number of students who earned industry certifications and/or a technical education high school diploma.
- Direct payment reimbursements are made to students through the [Early College Credit Program](#) (ECCP) through an application that documents their participation in college/university-level coursework while enrolled in high school.
- Annual state [postsecondary technical college grants](#) in various categories allow for employability preparation, development, and support of targeted participants, high school and adult, to access and complete postsecondary credentials in high-skill and high-growth industries.
- State School-Based Mental Health grants provide funds to public school districts and independent charter schools to work collaboratively with community mental health providers to address comprehensive student mental health. These funds can be used to purchase evidence-based SEL programs, pay for staff training and planning time, and provide activities to support parent and family engagement.

Philanthropic Organizations:

- The 2017-19 J.P. Morgan Chase NSFY grant was used to develop and pilot a regional intermediary model for career pathways in high-skill, high-growth industries, which became a statewide program in 2020. This program is now supported by federal Perkins V reserve funding and regional collaborative matching funds.

Wisconsin Recommendations

Wisconsin's journey is an exemplar for other states looking to do this work. While every state has its own context, Wisconsin's emphasis on developing inter-agency and cross-sector collaboration, leveraging strong foundations of existing career and workforce development efforts, and supporting practical implementation at the district level are key elements of systemic integration of SEL.

- 1. Wisconsin's success was built on the willingness of other agency teams to integrate systems to accomplish the shared goal of serving the whole child.** By sharing contacts and leveraging funding sources that bridged related projects, such as ACP with SEL and out-of-school time programs, inter-agency connections offered mutual benefit. In addition, forming cross-sector collaborations with employers was critical for understanding the needs of the workforce.
- 2. A second key to Wisconsin's success was their attention to supporting implementation.** Attuned to the multiple responsibilities of local districts, the Wisconsin team worked to ensure that implementing an SEL framework and integrating SEL into career and workforce development was not an added burden. To support quality implementation, the state began with high school initiatives and demonstrated the value and connections of SEL to current work already underway in the multiple career and workforce development initiatives (e.g., ACP, WBL, and Regional Career Pathways). In addition, the teams worked to provide resources to show the connections with other strategic initiatives (e.g., school counseling and mental health, CTE, special education, PBIS/Response to Intervention). Further, the ACP COP helped to support local district professional development and elevate exemplar schools. Wisconsin's intentional, systemic commitment to the integration of SEL and career and workforce development is a beacon for other states to follow.

Resources

Below is a summary of resources for the integration of the SEL, PCAP, WBL, and career pathways guidelines and standards in Wisconsin.

1. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

- [Wisconsin's SEL web pages](#)
- [Wisconsin's SEL Framework](#)
- Wisconsin SEL [Competencies](#)
- [Wisconsin's SEL toolkit](#)
- Wisconsin-specific [SEL competency crosswalks](#)
- [Request SEL technical assistance and a sign up for email list subscription](#)
- [District case studies](#)
- [Advancing Equity through Social and Emotional Learning strategies document](#)
- SEL [Professional Development and Training](#) page
- Wisconsin's Guide to SEL and Workforce Readiness: A Powerful Combination
- [Wisconsin's SEL and Career and Technical Education Employability Standards Crosswalk](#)
- [SEL Professional Development](#) system
- [Raising Caring Kids](#)
- [DWD's Skill Explorer tool](#)
- [CASEL CSI Developmental Framework for the Integration of SEL and Career and Workforce Development](#)

2. Personalized Career and Academic Plans (PCAPs)

- [Wisconsin ACP website](#)
- [ACP Flyer](#)
- [ACP Implementation: District Self-Assessment](#)
- [ACP Community of Practice](#) and [ACP and Social and Emotional](#)

Resources (continued)

[Learning](#) pages

- Wisconsin [ACP Research Findings and Tools](#)
- The ACP [Technology Platform](#) page
- Wisconsin [comprehensive school counseling programs](#)
- [ACP](#) page

3. Work-based Learning (WBL) and Early College Access

- [Wisconsin Guide to Implementing Career-Based Learning Experiences](#)
- All Wisconsin DWD YA programs and the DPI Employability Skills certification are [aligned to each other and to SEL competencies](#)
- A [Virtual Job Spotlight](#)
- [Employment of Minors information](#),
- [Inspire Wisconsin](#)
- The [Dual Enrollment in Wisconsin](#) page

4. Career Pathway Resources

- Wisconsin's [Regional Career Pathways](#) website
- [Map of state regional career pathway collaboratives](#)
- Current, state-approved Regional Career Pathways in [high-skill, high-growth industry sectors](#)
- Sample state-endorsed regional career pathway maps: [Healthcare sector](#); [Map Template](#); [Map Guide](#)
- [Labor Market Information](#) (LMI) is compiled with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development for educators through a [biannual guide](#).
- Regional Career Pathways are partially funded through the state's [Perkins reserve grant](#).

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