7 Steps for Choosing and Using SEL Assessments

Although 99% of principals are committed to SEL, only 17% know which competency assessments to use. In response, the Assessment Work Group has published a guide of quality measures, plus a seven-step plan for choosing and using the assessments.

1. FRAME THE OVERALL SEL EFFORT

Take a systematic approach that goes beyond the classroom and implements SEL schoolwide or districtwide. Adopt an SEL framework, such as CASEL’s widely used five competencies. And develop a theory of change.

2. PLAN THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT

Will you use the assessment formatively, to help inform instruction or elevate student voice, for instance? Or summatively, to evaluate and report on the impact of a particular SEL classroom program or practice?

3. CHOOSE THE SEL COMPETENCIES TO ASSESS

For instance, Transforming Education’s 3Ms Framework asks if the competencies are:
- Meaningful (have an impact on long-term student outcomes).
- Measurable (can be assessed in a school setting).
- Malleable (can be developed in a school setting), based on existing literature from multiple fields).

4. REVIEW THE ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

The AWG SEL Assessment Guide and the RAND Assessment Finder profile multiple measures.

5. SELECT ASSESSMENT TOOL(S)

Several practical factors may drive the choice of assessment:
- Cost
- Administrative and analytic capacity
- Scalability
- Reporting needs

6. IMPLEMENT ASSESSMENT

Be sure to:
- Establish clear roles and responsibilities.
- Identify stakeholders.
- Determine the frequency and timeline for data collection and use.
- Communicate the purpose.
- Ensure that the assessment is accessible and bias-free.
- Provide training to staff.

7. USE DATA

Formative uses are for learning. Summative uses are of learning.

Details in The Assessment Guide, which includes guidance on choosing and using SEL assessments, a catalog of available measures, and real-world examples of SEL assessment in action.