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

New Report Examines State of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Assessments,
Calls for Greater Coordination with School Policies,
Programs, and Professional Learning

CHICAGO, IL. – A leading group of scholars, test developers, and educators has published a landmark report that describes the evolving field of social and emotional learning (SEL) assessments and recommends steps for continued improvements.

The 53-page report, Student Social and Emotional Competence Assessment: The Current State of the Field and a Vision for Its Future, was developed over the past three years by the Assessment Work Group, managed by CASEL with leaders from the RAND Corporation, Harvard University, the California CORE Districts, Transforming Education, xSEL Labs, and several universities, nonprofit organizations, and school districts across the country. Clark McKown served as the lead author.

Key findings include:

- Social and emotional competencies can not only be taught—they can also be measured.
- Given the growing number of assessment tools (from student self-reports to performance measures), it remains essential to know the purpose of the assessment and select the appropriate tool(s).
- Quality assessments aren’t an add-on, but part of a comprehensive approach to rethink how best to educate children—extending from a district’s strategic plan and hiring practices to a school’s climate and a teacher’s classroom instruction.

Many schools, districts, and states across the nation are embracing SEL to provide students with a well-rounded education, aligning academics with important life skills such as teamwork, empathy, and responsible decision-making. “Given the growing interest in SEL and the appropriate role of SEL assessments, this report offers timely information about quality
assessment practices and ways to improve them in the future,” says Dr. Roger P. Weissberg, Chief Knowledge Officer at CASEL.

“Like SEL policy and practice, which have made meaningful advances, substantial progress has been made on developing feasible, useful, and scalable tools for educators to assess children’s social and emotional competencies. Nevertheless, the field of SEL assessment is still very much under development. Many assessments used for research to evaluate program impacts are not necessarily suitable for other applied uses,” the report finds.

It adds, “The field has moved from the question of whether student social and emotional competencies can be usefully assessed to questions about how best to do so as well as how to use the data generated in ways that yield the most benefit to teaching and learning practices.”


Next month, the Assessment Work Group will publish a companion piece developed by the National Practitioner Advisory Group. Both reports will be discussed on a webinar later this fall.

The Assessment Work Group is a multidisciplinary collaborative of leading education researchers and practitioners, managed by CASEL with leaders from the RAND Corporation, Harvard University, the California CORE Districts, Transforming Education, xSEL Labs, and several universities, nonprofit organizations, and school districts across the country. A three-year effort, members of the group worked to advance progress toward establishing practical SEL assessments that are scientifically sound, feasible to use, and actionable as a key priority for the field.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is a trusted source for knowledge about high-quality, evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL). CASEL supports educators and policy leaders and enhances the experiences and outcomes for all PreK-12 students.