

POLICY

SNAPSHOT

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Social and Emotional Skills for Life and Career: Policy Levers That Focus on the Whole Child

Although scores on achievement tests are important (especially to colleges), employers also want job candidates who are motivated and adaptable, are able to work well in teams and communicate effectively (in writing and verbally), have strong work ethics, have solid interpersonal skills, and are strategic in their planning skills (Gray & Koncz, 2014)—colleges want students who embody these characteristics too.

Because the mission of schools is to equip students for success in the future, a greater emphasis should be placed on the social and emotional skills students will need for work and for life. Social and emotional skills allow students to master rigorous college and career readiness standards (Yoder, 2013). When teachers and administrators acquire the knowledge and skills to incorporate social and emotional learning (SEL) into daily practice, students not only gain the skills that will help their future, but they also benefit from being in a safer and more supportive learning environment.

In this Policy Snapshot, we summarize existing research about the effects of education on students' social and emotional skills. We also identify important state and district policy considerations for initiating and integrating SEL, as well as for preparing and developing teachers and administrators to focus on the whole child.

This Policy Snapshot provides information that governors, state legislatures, state boards of education, state education agencies, and local education agencies may wish to consider when designing and implementing policies related to social and emotional learning. To help states make informed policy decisions, we also include practical examples of SEL policies and other resources. Although

What Is Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)?

Social and emotional learning is the process of developing and using the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that help youth and adults identify and regulate emotions, develop positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2013). CASEL identifies five SEL competencies:

- Self-awareness: Recognize one's own feelings, interests, strengths, and limitations.
- Self-management: Regulate emotions and manage daily stressors.
- Social awareness: Take perspective of others and appreciate similarities and differences.
- Relationship skills: Exhibit prosocial behavior and demonstrate positive social skills in developing meaningful relationships.
- Responsible decision making: Make ethical decisions, and strengthen the ability to develop appropriate solutions to identified problems.

states are moving toward high-quality SEL policies and standards to support SEL, there are limitations in existing policies and standards at the K–12 level (Dusenbury, Newman, Weissberg, Goren, Domitrovich, & Mart, 2015). The GTL Center does not endorse any of the particular policies or programs featured.

Other Important Frameworks to Note

Although social and emotional learning provides an efficient framework for the skills and competencies students need to be successful in school, in their career, and in life, there are also other frameworks that describe similar skills and competencies. Some of these frameworks include: executive function skills, noncognitive skills, 21st century skills, lifelong learning skills, and character education. To learn more about these frameworks, the College and Career Readiness Center provides an annotated bibliography: <http://www.ccrscenter.org/sites/default/files/Lifelong%20Learning%20Skills%20for%20College%20and%20Career%20Readiness.pdf>

What Does the Research Say About Social and Emotional Learning?

Research shows that educational efforts to promote social and emotional skills succeed in preparing students to participate in learning experiences and also increase students' capacity to learn (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). A series of studies has demonstrated that student learning is enhanced when teachers integrate SEL with academic learning (Elias, 2004). For example, when students develop social and emotional skills, they are more motivated to learn and more committed to school (as seen through improved attendance and graduation rates), and they are less likely to act out in class, get suspended, or be held back (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Not only does a focus on SEL in education relate to positive behaviors in school, research also demonstrates that students who participate in SEL programs are less likely to participate in risky behaviors (e.g., alcohol or drug use, pregnancy, and violence) (Hawkins, Graham, Maguin, Abbott, Hill, & Catalano, 1997; Wilson, Gottfredson, & Najaka, 2001).

In a major review of 213 studies evaluating SEL programs in schools, Durlak et al. (2011) found that students who participated in SEL programs (compared with students not in SEL programs) demonstrated the following:

- Increased academic achievement
- Increased social and emotional skills
- Improved attitude toward self and others
- Improved positive social behaviors
- Decreased conduct problems and emotional distress

These results were consistent across grade level (elementary, middle, and high school); location (urban, rural, and suburban); and school type (serving a range of ethnically and racially diverse student populations).

In the same way that students need to learn academic content, they also need to learn social and emotional skills, and research shows that it is possible for teachers to teach students these competencies. For example, students do not necessarily enter school knowing how to interact with teachers and peers about content, how to understand the ways emotions influence their classroom interactions (e.g., feeling challenged, bored, or frustrated), or how to persist in stressful academic situations (Osher, Sprague, Weissberg, Axelrod, Keenan, Kendziora, & Zins, 2008). In collaboration with families and the school community, teachers can explicitly teach students the social and emotional skills that are necessary for learning academic content and provide opportunities for students to apply those skills (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

Research-to-Policy: Effective Policies to Integrate SEL

As a universal approach that has the ability to positively affect student achievement, SEL has been embraced by federal, state, district, and school leaders as a way to support students' academic achievement. This has created a need for strategies to integrate SEL practices into the learning environment and curriculum at the state, district, school, and student levels. Although some states and districts have begun the important work of integrating SEL policies and practices, work needs to continue in developing approaches that consider the whole child, including development of model policies, guidelines, and standards that can be used across state and district contexts. More work is also needed in understanding how these policies translate into school and classroom practices (Dusenbury et al., 2015).

To inform this Policy Snapshot, the author reviewed policy databases that focused on SEL, school climate, and prosocial behaviors. These policy databases came from the Collaborative on Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE), and the National School Climate Center (NSCC). In addition, the author reviewed literature from policy organizations (e.g., National Association of State Boards of Education and the College and Career Readiness and Success Center) and other policy briefs (e.g., Dusenbury et al., 2015; Jones & Bouffard, 2012) that have reviewed and recommended SEL policies.

The SEL policies reviewed are organized into the following four approaches: (1) SEL standards; (2) guidelines that support SEL (i.e., SEL policy, integrative approach, connection with school climate, or whole-child approaches); (3) accountability systems (e.g., teacher and principal evaluation); and (4) professional learning.

Important Note: Although we divide the policies in these four categories, states and districts generally use multiple approaches to implement SEL-related policies. And regardless of the approach, states and districts should connect their standards and policies to evidence-based practices so that teachers know how to teach social and emotional skills and competencies.

Key Resource

The National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE) and the National School Climate Center (NSCC) have developed policy scans across all 50 states and territories on laws and regulations related to school climate, prosocial behavior, and bully prevention. In addition, CASEL provides multiple policy recommendations on the integration of SEL.

- NCSSLE: <http://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/school-discipline-compendium>
- NSCC: <http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/database.php>
- CASEL: <http://www.casel.org/policy/>

1. SEL Standards

Developing and adopting SEL standards is one policy initiative that states and districts are using to integrate SEL into their schools. Standards represent “what students should know and be able to do as a result of educational instruction” (Zinsser, Weissberg, & Dusenbury, 2013, p. 2). The six key elements involved in developing high-quality SEL standards include the following (Dusenbury et al., 2015):

- Develop SEL standards that are free-standing and comprehensive (prekindergarten to Grade 12). These should provide clear and concise language, and should incorporate developmental benchmarks for student SEL knowledge and behavior for the five core competencies.
- Integrate with other standards from other subjects.
- Include guidance documents on how to incorporate SEL standards through teaching practices and instruction.
- Connect to guidance on the development of a positive school climate.
- Ensure that the standards are culturally (and linguistically) sensitive.
- Link to effective supports and resources, including SEL programs, practices, assessment, and professional learning.

Key Resource

CASEL provides example state and district policies and practices related to each of the six key features of SEL standards: <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/513f799e4b05ce7b70e9673/t/54d4ff94e4b0114c954b46cc/1423245204061/revise+key-features-of-high-quality-SEL-standards-1-24-15.pdf>

The development of high-quality SEL standards affords educational leaders the opportunity to set goals for SEL and skill building that will help students successfully master academic content and have lifelong success (Zinsser et al., 2013). Similarly, standards may provide educators a blueprint for the SEL skills that students should exhibit on a developmental continuum and on how to integrate SEL with academic instruction (Dusenbury et al., 2015).

Currently, four states (Illinois, Kansas, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia) and a few districts (e.g., Anchorage, Alaska; Austin, Texas) have adopted free-standing and comprehensive SEL standards. Many times state SEL standards come from legislation (e.g., Illinois SEL standards came from the Children’s Mental Health Act) or from policy (e.g., the Kansas SECD standards policy). Other states (e.g., Idaho and Washington) have free-standing SEL standards, but these standards are typically focused on the early elementary grades. The majority of states, however, have SEL standards for prekindergarten students (Dusenbury et al., 2015). Other states (e.g., Maine, Tennessee, Vermont, and Washington) have adopted standards that contain components of SEL standards, but generally use slightly different terms to describe the SEL-related skills. For example, Rule Chapter 132 of the Maine Department of Education outlines the Career and Education Development standards (<http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/05/chaps05.htm>). These standards were developed to help students gain the knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to be successful in developing relationships, setting goals, and becoming successful citizens. In other words, they represent similar skills and competencies, but use a different framework to describe them.

Although most states do not have free-standing or comprehensive SEL standards, many states do have some SEL components within their academic standards. For example, the Common Core State Standards, which have been adopted by a majority of states, include Speaking and Listening standards, which focus on communication and participating in discussions (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Similarly, some states include the development of social and emotional skills in their definition of college and career readiness (Mishkind, 2014). Even though aspects of SEL are embedded within current academic standards, in this context the social and emotional skills risk getting lost within the academic content. Zinsser et al. (2013) suggest that it is important to also develop free-standing SEL standards and align them to the academic standards.

SEL standards provide a description of the SEL skills that students are capable of exhibiting across a developmental continuum; however, SEL standards alone are generally not sufficient. Further policy supports are needed to ensure that educators know and understand these standards, and have the necessary supports to implement and assess the standards (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

State Spotlight

West Virginia

In July 2012, the West Virginia legislature enacted Policy 4373 (<http://wvde.state.wv.us/healthyschools/ElectronicManual4373New.html>), Expected Behavior in Safe and Supportive Schools. West Virginia developed a policy that integrates multiple components of the development of safe and supportive schools into one policy, including expected student dispositions (which are defined by CASEL's SEL competencies), student rights and responsibilities, planning for policy implementation, inappropriate behavior and meaningful interventions and consequences, and procedures for addressing inappropriate behaviors (alleged and substantiated). This policy was explicit in aiming to address conditions necessary to promote positive behaviors and address student misbehavior under one policy, acknowledging that both are necessary for a safe and supportive learning environment.

As part of Policy 4373, the state included social skills standards to serve as a framework for schoolwide behavioral expectations. There are three standards that align directly with the five CASEL SEL competencies: self-awareness and self-management, social awareness and interpersonal skills, and decision making. These standards comprise multiple objectives, which spiral from one grade band to the next (Prekindergarten–Grade 1, Grade 2–4, Grade 5–8, and Grade 9–12). For each standard by grade band, Policy 4373 outlines example behaviors, which include individual behaviors (behaviors students can do independently), initiative behaviors (social interactions that students initiate), and responsive interactions (behaviors in which students react to a social cue), and also work skill interactions for Grade 9–12.

Along with defining the social skills standards, Policy 4373 identifies the academic content standards that align with the social skills standards. The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) further plans to develop an alignment tool to be more explicit about the academic standards and the social skills standards. In addition, the policy connects school climate and culture with other West Virginia codes and WVDE policies (e.g., licensure of professional personnel and performance evaluation of school personnel). Policy 4373 further requires that each county board of education has an approved policy on how it plans to implement Policy 4373. This policy also provides interventions and consequences for four levels of infractions.

Sample State and District Resources

Dusenbury and colleagues (2015) suggested that SEL standards should include additional supports and guidance to ensure that standards are of high quality, including guidelines on supportive learning environments and best teaching practices, how to make SEL instruction culturally and linguistically relevant, and how to ensure high-quality implementation. The websites below direct users to the resources that states and districts have developed to integrate their SEL standards.

Anchorage, Alaska (<http://www.asdk12.org/pld/sel/>)



Anchorage School District developed an implementation and sustainability process to further promote the integration of SEL into its current work (http://www.asdk12.org/media/anchorage/globalmedia/documents/sel/SEL_ISPhistory.pdf).

Austin, Texas (<http://www.austinsd.org/academics/sel>)



The Austin Independent School District (AISD) SEL website hosts multiple resources to facilitate implementation within targeted schools and across the district. Some of these resources include collaborative efforts that AISD has used across other divisions to move this work forward, as well as additional resources that parents and students can use to develop SEL skills.

Illinois (http://www.isbe.net/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm)



Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) provides additional resources to help support the implementation of SEL across the state, and provides other connections within ISBE that would support the implementation of SEL (e.g., relationships and school climate).

Kansas (<http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=482>)



To help educators implement the state's Social, Emotional, Character Development (SECD) standards, the Kansas Department of Education website includes tools for aligning them to the Kansas Common Core State Standards, as well as example instructional strategies to help students master the knowledge and skills within SECD.

Pennsylvania (<http://www.pdesas.org/SafeSchools/Main/Standard/0/>)



To help educators develop the interpersonal skills standards implementation, Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) developed "materials and resources" that align to each indicator by grade level (<http://www.pdesas.org/Standard/Views#0|12432|0|0>). These resources include sample lessons, assessments, a safe-school resource (an external organization or tool), and other educational resources (note: PDE interpersonal standards are being reviewed and revised in 2015).

2. Guidelines That Support SEL

Educators generally believe that focusing on social and emotional skills is an important ingredient for academic success, yet the majority of educators report that they do not have the time to teach SEL within the school day (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013). It is therefore important to provide general guidance to state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), and educators on how to incorporate social and emotional learning (Dymnicki, Sambolt, & Kidron, 2014). This can be done through a state or district SEL policy, through integration with other positive behavioral support initiatives, through integration with school climate improvement efforts, or through whole child approaches.

- a. **SEL policy.** Some states and districts have incorporated an SEL policy (see State Spotlight: New York for an example). These policies generally provide a rationale for SEL, SEL connections to other behavioral and academic supports (e.g., Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support [PBIS] or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support [MTSS]), and processes and supports to integrate SEL.

For example, SEL is a key pillar of Oakland Unified School District's five-year strategic plan, which includes an SEL policy (<http://www.ousd.k12.ca.us/cms/lib07/CA01001176/Centricity/Domain/143/SEL%20Board%20Policy%20BP%205031.pdf>). This policy describes the rationale for focusing on SEL, reinforces the connection between SEL and academic learning, and outlines the need for SEL standards. It further outlines the policies and procedures that the board will use to ensure that SEL is integrated throughout the district and that students learn in safe and supportive learning environments, including a shift in the mission to specifically focus on SEL, development of an infrastructure to support SEL, communication and accountability strategies, adoption of curriculum and standards, and strategic use of data to improve programming.

- b. **Integrative approach.** SEL is the process of developing student social and emotional skills. Students can develop SEL in multiple ways, including through explicit SEL skill instruction, teaching practices, integration of SEL instruction with academic content, and infusion of SEL in the development of a positive school climate. In addition, other programs and interventions (e.g., restorative justice, PBIS, MTSS) align well to SEL and also support the development of social and emotional skills in students. These systems support and align with SEL in two ways. First, for multi-tiered systems, such as PBIS and MTSS, SEL is considered a universal or tier one approach that will help all systems. Second, by promoting positive approaches to discipline, students are more likely to interact with adults who appear more supportive and caring. When students develop positive relationships with adults and peers, research demonstrates that students achieve better academically and develop emotional skills.

For example, Maryland State Board of Education tasked the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) with establishing a workgroup to determine best disciplinary practices in the state, specifically focusing on the development of prosocial behaviors and identifying the professional learning needs of teachers and principals. To create the link between the development of prosocial behaviors and academic success, the board enacted eight reforms: (1) use a prosocial approach to discipline and adopt new discipline regulations; (2) convene a discipline workgroup; (3) reconvene the student code of conduct workgroup; (4) direct MSDE to analyze discipline data and determine any discipline disparities; (5) require minimum education systems for students who are expelled or suspended; (6) adopt amendments to school discipline regulations; (7) collect criminal and juvenile justice systems data; and (8) work with school systems to identify which schools need assistance in implementing PBIS (it is important to note that PBIS and MTSS are not the same thing as SEL. There are ways that these approaches can support and enhance one another).

Similarly, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) SEL strategies are part of the Humanware initiative—a strategic plan to develop positive conditions for learning across the district. To support SEL, CMSD developed an SEL scope and sequence by grade level by quarter (similar to SEL standards; <http://www.clevelandmetroschools.org/cms/lib05/OH01915844/Centricity/shared/districtfiles/departments/humanware/SEL%20Scope%20and%20Sequence1.pdf>). In addition, Grade K–5 teachers are trained in the Promoting

Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) SEL curriculum, which allows teachers to develop a common SEL language and creates a foundation of SEL integration. Also, schools have planning centers where students can obtain social and emotional support from a highly trained paraprofessional, and schools have school support teams that focus on SEL implementation, students who are at risk, bullying prevention, and general school climate. Further, CMSD administers a “conditions for learning” survey three times per year, which assesses the social and emotional climate within a school, among other school conditions. Schools use these data in their school improvement process.

- c. Connection With School Climate.** Focusing on school climate is one approach that can be used to develop and promote SEL and prosocial behaviors because it creates an environment that allows SEL to develop naturally. Additional states (e.g., Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Rhode Island, and Washington) and districts (e.g., Washoe County, Nevada) include strategies to use prosocial interventions as a consequence of misconduct or a preventative measure for student misconduct or bullying within their policies (<http://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/school-discipline-compendium>). For example, Louisiana enacted a law that required the state board to create a model plan on positive behaviors. R.S. 17:252—“School Master Plans for Supporting Student Behavior and Discipline”—states that the State Board of Education will create a model plan for improving student behavior and student discipline in schools, including using classroom management strategies that promote positive behaviors.

What Is School Climate?

School climate is a broad term that generally reflects the quality of a student’s environment in school. It is based on staff members’, students’, and parents’ experiences at school, and reflects student and staff safety (physical and emotional), support, and social and emotional wellbeing (Osher & Kendziora, 2010; Tarry & Pickeral, 2012).

Furthermore, some states incorporate SEL into their school climate guidelines. For example, Ohio has nine school climate guidelines, which suggest that the development of positive school climate and coordinated mental health services should be incorporated into districts’ school improvement efforts (https://saferschools.ohio.gov/content/ohio_school_climate_guidelines). Still other states incorporate the development of positive relationships, concerns for student well-being, and overall positive school climate as part of their strategic school improvement planning (Piscatelli & Lee, 2011).

- d. Whole Child Approach.** Another integrative approach includes a focus on the whole child. This approach also includes school climate, SEL, and alternative suspensions, and also aims to prevent other social problems (e.g., drug and alcohol use, pregnancy, and violence). With this approach, the focus is not only on school-level supports, but also on making connections with community organizations. This integrative approach is primarily led by ASCD’s Whole Child Initiative (<http://www.wholechildeducation.org/>), which promotes coordinated school health processes among educators, mental health centers, and the broader community.

Key Resource

ASCD provides state policy recommendations to incorporate the whole child:
<http://www.ascd.org/public-policy/wholechildpolicies.aspx>

Arkansas' S.B. 1051 (<http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/policy/AR-WC-Recognition-ProgramAct1326.pdf>) created the Whole Child, Whole Community Recognition Program. The overarching goal is to think about students beyond academic achievement and beyond the school doors, thinking about the integration of the social, emotional, physical, health, and academic development of students, and how the school and out-of-school context influence the development of the whole child. Through this program, the state seeks to measure student overall well-being and determine how adults in various community organizations come together to meet the needs of Arkansas' students. This law outlines strategies that educators, policy makers, community members, and parents can take to facilitate development of the whole child.

State Spotlight

New York

The Children's Mental Health Act of 2006 required the state to develop a statewide Children's Plan. As part of this plan, New York developed the Social/Emotional Development and Learning (SEDL) initiative to develop positive conditions for learning and implement a holistic approach to educating the students in New York. In the SEDL initiative, New York provides guidance on a continuum of support for students in prekindergarten through Grade 12; connects SEDL to other state initiatives, including college and career readiness and conditions for learning; and provides implementation supports and challenges. In addition, on the SEDL website, New York provides resources covering what SEDL looks like in action, as well as a map of the programs districts are implementing across the state.

3. Accountability Systems

The number of policy initiatives focusing on SEL and prosocial behaviors has increased in the past decade. For example, the 15 districts that won the U.S. Department of Education Race to the Top—District grants in 2012 were required to include performance metrics related to non-cognitive skills, which can include physical well-being or social and emotional growth (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Similarly, the districts in California (the "Core Districts") that received the 2013 ESEA flexibility waiver requirements are including school climate and SEL as part of their accountability requirements (see District Spotlight: California CORE Districts for more information).

As another way to continue to inform SEL-related policies, as well as understand the effect of the policies on school and student outcomes, some states (e.g., Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Michigan, and Utah) are requiring data collection on student discipline (Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2014a).

In addition, other states require school climate data to be collected and used on state report cards (e.g., Illinois) or educator evaluations systems (e.g., North Carolina; Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2014b). Data collection and monitoring for the continuous improvement process also is a primary strategy to reduce discipline disparities and improve school climate in the

Important to Note

If using school climate or SEL data within accountability systems or within the school improvement process, educators should work with researchers to ensure that the assessments are valid and reliable (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

guidance documents recently released by the U.S. Department of Education (2014). Taken together, measuring and tracking skill data, behavior data, and climate data will facilitate the improvement process in schools.

District Spotlight

California Core Districts (<http://coredistricts.org/>)

As part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility waiver, 10 districts in California developed a collaborative, the Core Districts, to implement a school quality improvement system (SQIS), which focuses on developing students to be college and career ready. Through this collaborative, the Core Districts developed the SQIS index for principal and teacher evaluation systems. The Core Districts are including SEL skills (growth mindset, self-efficacy, self-management, and social awareness), as well as other disciplinary and behavior reports (e.g., expulsion/suspension rates, absenteeism) within the index (<http://coredistricts.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/SE-CC-Domain-Social-Emotional-Skills-updated-10.3.14-1.pdf>). In addition, they are including culture and climate of a school (as assessed by a staff, parent, and student survey; special education identification; and English language learner redesignation rates) as part of the index.

4. Professional Learning

To implement SEL successfully and integrate it with academics, it is helpful for educators to participate in professional learning activities (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Professional learning helps teachers understand how to help students achieve SEL benchmarks through teaching practices, positive learning environments, and curricula. There are policies that relate to teacher professional learning on SEL. At the federal level, Tim Ryan (D-Ohio) introduced H. R. 850, the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2015, to committee. This bill defines SEL and the importance of SEL, and amends ESEA to explicitly allow Title II funds for teacher and principal professional development on SEL programming and practices. Similarly, H. R. 4509, the Supporting Social and Emotional Learning Act, which was introduced by Susan Davis (D-California) in 2014, amends the Higher Education Act to ensure that prospective teachers and principals learn about SEL in their coursework, as well as to ensure that educators are trained on SEL (i.e., what it is and how to integrate it in schools and classrooms). Along with these bills, the U.S. Department of Education allows some Title II, Part A funds to be used for teacher professional development on preventive measures as long as an LEA applies to its SEA (Rentner & Price, 2014).

Additional guidelines and policies have been adopted by states on providing professional development to educators on alternative approaches to discipline, development of positive school climate, and strategies to focus on the overall well-being of students (no policies were identified that focused explicitly on providing professional development on social and emotional learning). For example, in Georgia's Title 20–Education Code 20-2, there are three sections that focus on educator professional learning on prosocial behaviors and climate (<http://law.justia.com/codes/georgia/2006/20/20-2.html>): (1) Code 20-2-145 requires teacher professional development on character education; (2) Code 20-2-155 requires the Georgia Board of Education to establish a school climate

Key Resource

Kansas developed sample instructional practices that teachers can use to help students master their SECD standards: <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=482>

management system, including providing technical assistance to districts and schools in using the system; and (3) Code 20-2-739 requires educator professional development on conflict resolution strategies and cultural diversity training.

Along with in-service professional learning, some states have sought to incorporate SEL into standards for pre-service teachers. For example, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE) included SEL within its Professional Standards for Teachers (PST)¹ and indicators. Under standard two, Teaching all Students, indicator e states, “Social and Emotional Learning Indicator: Employs a variety of strategies to assist students to develop social emotional competencies...” (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/advisories/TeachersGuidelines.pdf>). In meeting this standard, teacher candidates will learn about SEL in their pre-service coursework. For more information on SEL in teacher education, visit the SEL-TEd website that explores SEL content in teacher preparation programs (<http://selted.weebly.com/index.html>).

Conclusion

The number of policies, regulations, and guidelines that include SEL, school climate, and other prosocial behaviors has increased substantially in the past decade. Policymakers and educators recognize that the social and emotional skills students develop will promote academic learning and prepare students to be college and career ready. SEL is a comprehensive framework that can be used to support the social, emotional, and overall well-being of students. SEL standards that are successfully adopted share common elements, such as being comprehensive and free-standing, connected to academic content, supportive of a positive school climate, and culturally sensitive.

Other approaches that also have been successful in integrating SEL practices systemically are general guidance, SEL policies, general integration, connection with school climate, whole child approaches, accountability systems, and professional learning experiences for educators and pre-service teachers. An integrated approach that incorporates SEL standards, assessment of those standards, and professional learning will better support the development of student social, emotional, and academic skills. This integrated approach will be strengthened when direct connections are made with academics (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

It is critical that policymakers incorporate social and emotional learning in key education policies (e.g., ESEA reauthorization), as well as increase funding to support the implementation of SEL programs, to improve professional learning experiences for educators, and continue to support research activities that study the impact of SEL (<http://www.casel.org/policy/recommendations/>).

Key Resource

Center on Education Policy (CEP) recently released *A Guide to Federal Education Programs That Can Fund K-12 Universal Prevention and SEL Activities*: <http://www.cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=437>

¹ This indicator is not included in the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework for in-service teachers.

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I WANT TO LEARN MORE!

The Collaborative on Academic Social and Emotional Learning is a leading organization on SEL. One key resource is the 2013 CASEL Guide, which outlines SEL programs with the strongest research base.

The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders has an “SEL School” that provides tools and strategies on how to integrate SEL into college and career readiness standards and teacher evaluation systems.

Edutopia provides an online learning hub for research, videos, and classroom materials.

The National Clearinghouse on Supportive School Discipline provides an overview of SEL research, tools and strategies, and on-the-ground examples.

ASCD’s The Whole Child initiative provides a variety of tools and resources to help educators learn about and implement SEL in schools.

For more examples or information on this topic, please e-mail gtlcenter@air.org. **Nick Yoder** is a research and technical assistance expert at the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders.