



SEL4US Unifying Policy Principles

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Introduction

The Social Emotional Learning Alliance of the United States (SEL4US) is a grassroots national network that empowers local advocates to influence and support their communities to implement high-quality social and emotional learning (SEL). Through its member groups, SEL4US works at the state and community levels to raise awareness of the benefits of SEL, promote and support effective SEL implementation, and advance policies and funding to sustain and spread the use of high-quality SEL.

Defining SEL

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for diverse others, establish and maintain a range of supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions ([CASEL: What is SEL?](#)).

For all students to benefit, school and SEL efforts must be implemented equitably and intentionally advance equity; promote antiracism; elevate students' cultural assets, voice, participation, and agency; and foster humanity, dignity, connection and belonging for all individuals and groups. We recognize the pervasive influence of historical, systemic, and unconscious racism throughout our society. We also believe that SEL skills, such as emotional empathy and perspective-taking, can be learned in ways that foster the courage to name and interrupt corrosive systemic and individual racial bias. Adults need these skills as much as our youth.

When we reference SEL, we recognize its complementary nature to related areas that also stress social and emotional development and the safe, supportive and engaging environments that support it, including: whole child development, positive youth development, character development, 21st century skills, workforce readiness, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), trauma-informed practice, equity and inclusion, restorative justice, and positive climate and culture for schools and communities. We also recognize that not all SEL-related efforts embrace the principles we have noted above regarding equity,

antiracism, and belonging. Those principles provide strong guidance to SEL4US in determining our collaborations.

SEL Policy Principles

The following unifying principles guide state- and community-based SEL advocacy efforts for SEL4US and its member groups. This list is intentionally high-level, since specific context-based policies—including legislation, regulation and guidance—may look different from state to state and community to community.

1. IMPLEMENTATION—All children and youth acquire SEL competencies inside and outside of school

- a. Prioritize and support implementation of systemic, culturally-responsive, evidence-based SEL programs and practices in schools and youth-serving organizations
- b. Define SEL learning goals with culturally-responsive and developmentally -appropriate benchmarks for preschool- through high school-aged children
- c. Support efforts to promote safe, supportive and engaging learning environments
- d. Support family engagement efforts that integrate culturally-responsive, evidence-based SEL

2. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING—All adults in schools and youth-serving organizations participate in pre-service and ongoing professional learning for continuous improvement in adult social and emotional competence and SEL teaching practice

- a. Support professional learning for ongoing improvement of adult social and emotional competence and SEL practice for educators, youth development professionals, administrators, and support staff in schools and youth-serving organizations
- b. Support educator preparation programs to integrate focused coursework and practice on culturally-responsive, equity-focused, and evidence-based SEL
- c. Require demonstration of culturally-responsive, evidence-based SEL teaching practice for educator certification and licensure renewal

3. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT—Schools and youth-serving organizations measure and analyze SEL practice, social and emotional competence and organizational climate for continuous improvement in teaching and learning

- a. Support the measurement, reporting, and analysis of climate in schools and youth-serving organizations with validated tools that include measures of equity and inclusion
- b. Provide or recommend validated tools, which include measures of equity and inclusion, for measuring climate in schools and youth-serving organizations
- c. Support schools and youth-serving organizations to collect and analyze data on SEL practice and program implementation as well as behavior management and discipline actions, including analysis of differential practices for different populations of students
- d. Support schools and youth-serving organizations to collect, analyze, and align social and emotional competence data for improving SEL practices and student outcomes within those organizations

4. FUNDING—States and communities make appropriate funding available in order to achieve the above goals

Additional Resources

Many organizations have published reports, compendiums and websites for researching and developing policy to support SEL. Please see our [SEL Policy Resource List](#) for an up-to-date list of these resources.