



SEL
DALLAS

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDEBOOK



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Welcome to the SEL Implementation Guidebook for Dallas!

Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD), Big Thought, Dallas Afterschool, and the City of Dallas Park & Recreation began a collaborative partnership to design social and emotional learning (SEL) plans and execute aligned strategies for in-school and out-of-school-time (OST) spaces. In partnership with our campus and OST program staff, we have tried, learned, tweaked and grown different aspects of our SEL work and want to share our best practices with the broader Dallas community.

We hope that this information will help expedite learning for new campuses and OST providers looking to start their own SEL implementation journeys.

We encourage you to use this Guidebook as a starting point for SEL implementation and partnership building, and as an ongoing reference resource for practice ideas.

Although there are many resources and recommendations within the Guidebook that will apply to both in-school and out-of-school-time spaces, we made an effort to differentiate guidance as needed so that school practitioners and OST practitioners have realistic tools and information for their specific settings, too.

The SEL Implementation Guidebook is divided into the following sections:

1. SEL Introduction
2. SEL Dallas Approach
3. In-School and Out of School Time (OST) Partnership
4. Implementation Considerations - Getting Started
5. Systems, Structures, and Continuous Improvement
6. Appendix - Additional SEL Resources & Partner Organizations

The SEL Dallas team recognizes that implementation is an iterative journey that requires ample time to design, coordinate, and tailor to your unique environment. Moreover, adults need time to learn, practice, and build upon their SEL skills and knowledge to be most effective when facilitating SEL practices with students and guiding their development. We encourage you to always be intentional and focused in your planning and partnership development efforts.

At this point in our journey, the SEL Dallas leadership team is still growing with goals to develop family and caregiver-focused SEL support, facilitate opportunities for student leadership and voice, and support continuous improvement cycles. We look forward to adding new content to this Guidebook as we continue our own learning and identify additional best practices.

Thank you for your interest to implement social and emotional learning strategies with your staff, students, and families. We are excited to see SEL implementation expand across our community and to see all the many ways that students and adults can connect through SEL!

- The SEL Dallas Team



CONTENT

01

INTRODUCTION

02

SEL DALLAS APPROACH

03

IN-SCHOOL AND OUT OF SCHOOL TIME
(OST) PARTNERSHIP

04

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS -
GETTING STARTED

05

SYSTEMS, STRUCTURES,
AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

06

APPENDIX - ADDITIONAL SEL RESOURCES



INTRODUCTION

SEL Dallas Vision

A city where children and adults are prepared with the social and emotional skills to lead healthy, productive lives.

SEL Dallas Mission

To foster collaborative communities that promote social and emotional development through in-school and out-of-school programs.

SEL Dallas Definition

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) builds the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that both students and adults need to be successful in school, work, and life. They include things such as knowing and controlling your emotions, teamwork, understanding others, making positive choices, and resilience.

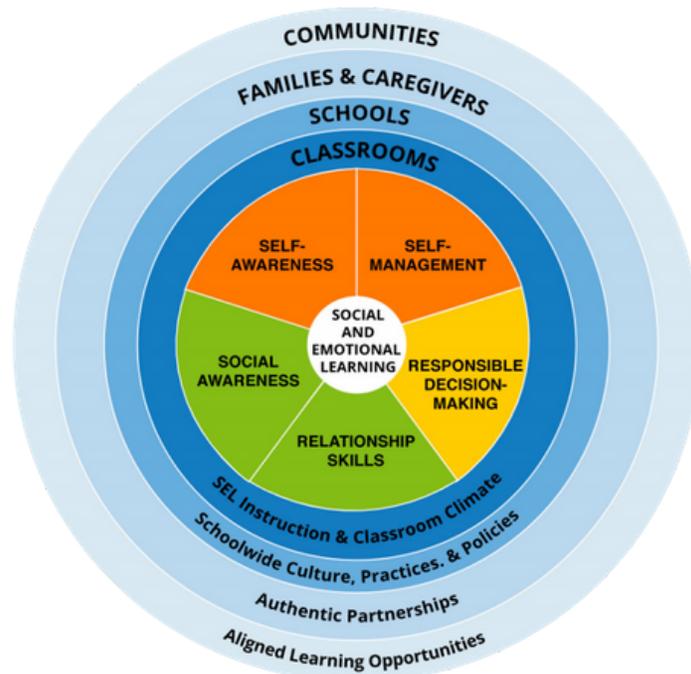


SEL COMPETENCIES

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has identified five core SEL competencies, including Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making. Together, these competencies support both inner and outer connections such as understanding one’s identity and values while likewise building positive relationships with others and valuing diverse experiences and perspectives. In this way, SEL is an ongoing process for both students and adults with relevant applications in all aspects of our lives (personal, academic / professional, etc.).

“CASEL visualizes the five competencies across four rings: classrooms, schools, families and caregivers, and communities, noting that these areas of a student’s life are closely connected (and therefore, SEL should likewise be infused across these areas). Afterschool and out-of-school-time programs are an integral part of a student’s life as well and an excellent opportunity for SEL skill development. In that way, out-of-school-time may fall within both the school-level and community-level rings, and can also serve as aligned learning opportunities for our students.”

Download a [one-pager describing the five SEL competencies](#).



VALUE AND PURPOSE OF SEL

In 2019, the Aspen Institute released a report, [From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development](#), describing the need for social and emotional learning and providing implementation recommendations for a range of stakeholders.

Incorporating social and emotional learning into ongoing learning is meaningful for students and adults in the following ways:

- With an approach grounded in SEL skills and relationship-building, students develop positive relationships with peers and adults as well as collaboration skills such as communication, listening to other perspectives, and empathy, to use while learning in school and during out of school time activities.
- By emphasizing ongoing individual reflection and perspective-taking, SEL can support the development of individuals' beliefs and pride in their unique identities as well as develop appreciation of others' identities and viewpoints.
- Above technical skills, employers look for employees with strong SEL skills including communication skills, the ability to work well in teams, emotional intelligence, and the ability to follow through on challenging tasks, among others. [In a recent study](#), the majority of companies surveyed (79%) ranked social and emotional skills as their number one most important skill set.*
- Finally, we know that a key antidote to trauma is positive, trusting relationships with others (especially for students to have positive relationships with adults). By embedding regular opportunities for relationship-building, we can support students and adults in building safe, supportive learning environments and reduce the negative impact of trauma.

Adults and students do not simply gain these skills with the passage of time. It is valuable and necessary to directly teach these specific SEL skills, incorporate them in ongoing learning, and guide continual refinement across all five SEL competencies.

*W. Cunningham and P. Villasenor, “Employer voices, employer demands, and implications for public skills development policy connecting the labor and education sectors,” World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 7582 (Washington: World Bank Group, 2016).



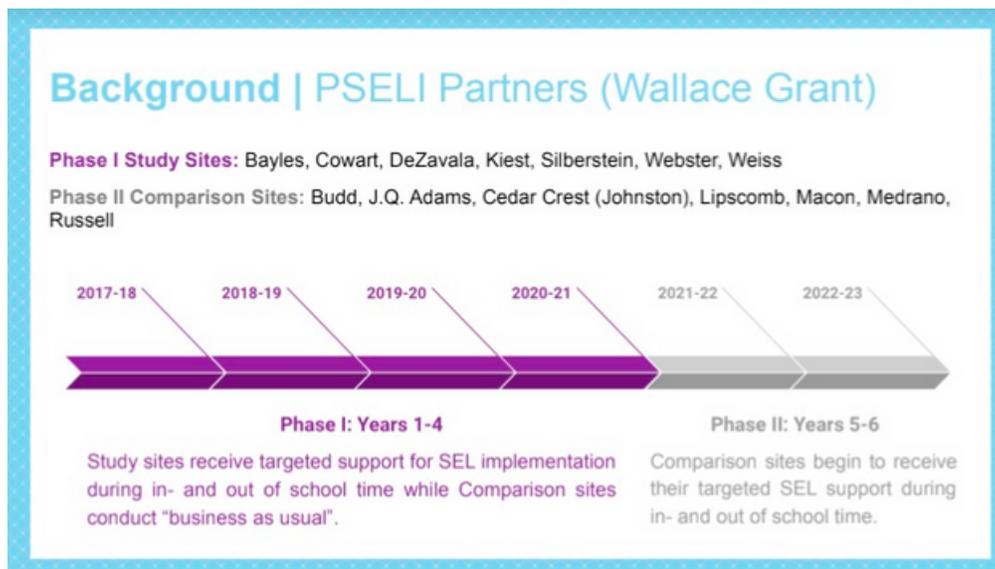
PSELI GRANT OVERVIEW

Purpose & Background

In the summer of 2017, Dallas Independent School District and Big Thought were awarded a six-year Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative (PSELI) implementation grant from The Wallace Foundation. The grant's guiding question is: If urban schools and their afterschool partners work together to improve and align experiences and climate to foster children's social and emotional learning, will students benefit?

Six communities were chosen by The Wallace Foundation to receive six-year PSELI implementation grants.

Each of these communities had previously committed to including social and emotional learning in their services to children. Sites were chosen based on fit with The Wallace Foundation's dual goals of helping local partners to strengthen their capacity and developing new knowledge that will be useful to the field.



Partners

To effectively answer this question in Dallas, Dallas ISD and Big Thought are partnering with Dallas Afterschool and City Of Dallas Park & Recreation to align planning, training, and continuous cycles of improvement for the benefit of staff and students at our 14 PSELI grant sites. This ongoing collaborative partnership among Dallas ISD, Big Thought, Dallas Afterschool, and the City of Dallas Park & Recreation is called SEL Dallas. The SEL Dallas team receives ongoing planning and implementation support from our technical assistance partners at CASEL and the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality.

For more information on SEL Dallas partners and responsibilities, see Section III: In-School and Out-of-School-Time (OST) Partnership.

Grant Phases

Our 14 PSELI grant sites are broken up into two Phases. Phase I sites are expected to implement comprehensive SEL in grant years 1 through 4, which includes intensive, ongoing support from all local partners.

Alternatively, Phase II sites, during grant years 1-4, are meant to operate “business as usual” and not implement any SEL practices or related training (for in- or out of school time) as part of a long-term study of PSELI implementation.

During grant years 5-6, Phase II sites lead their SEL implementation process and receive ongoing support for in- and out of school alignment at an accelerated pace with local partner guidance.

PHASE ONE

Bayles ES - Dallas Park & Recreation
 Leila P. Cowart ES - Dallas Parks & Recreation
 Lorenzo De Zavala ES - Big Thought
 Edwin J. Kiest ES - Dallas Parks & Recreation
 Ascher Silberstein ES - Dallas Park & Recreation
 Daniel Webster ES - Big Thought
 Martin Weiss ES - Dallas Park & Recreation

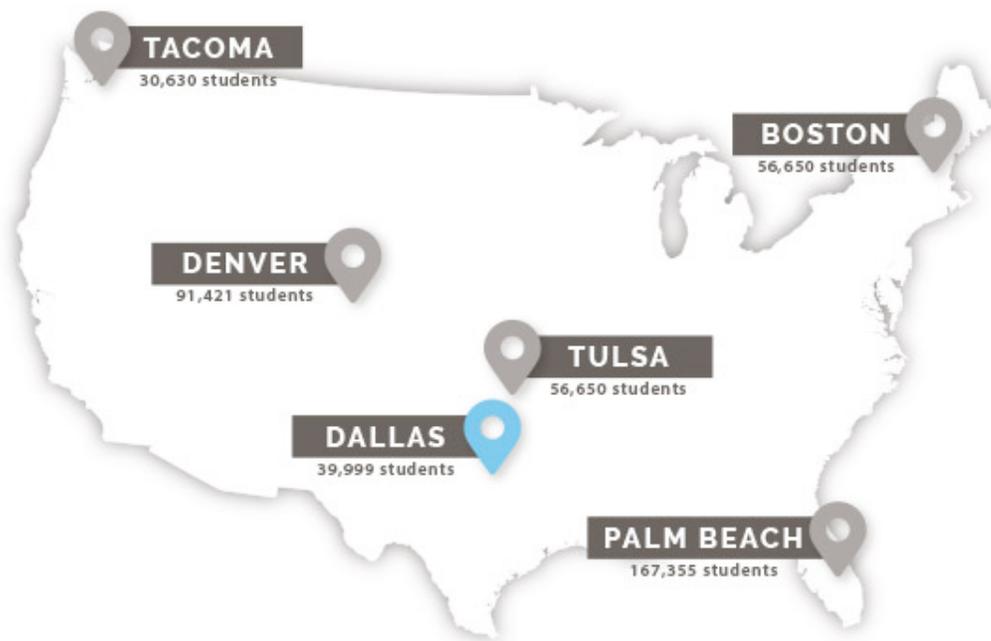
PHASE TWO

John Quincy Adams ES - Dallas Park & Recreation
 Harrell Budd ES - Dallas Park & Recreation
 Cedar Crest ES - Boys and Girls Club
 William Lipscomb ES - Boys and Girls Club
 B.H. Macon ES - Dallas Park & Recreation
 Esperanza Medrano ES - St. Simons
 Clinton P. Russell ES - Dallas Park & Recreation



Long-Term Study

To document the learning process and collect relevant information for the field, The Wallace Foundation has partnered with the [RAND Corporation](#) to conduct a long-term study of the PSEL grant (across six PSEL communities). Not only does this benefit each of the PSEL communities as they receive ongoing data and feedback from students and staff members over the course of the grant but this likewise contributes to a national understanding of what it takes to effectively align in- and out of school SEL implementation efforts for meaningful impact.



SEL DALLAS IMPLEMENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

By the end of the 2020 school year, SEL Dallas had achieved the following:

- Six of seven Phase I sites became AQuA certified by Dallas Afterschool for the quality of their afterschool programming.

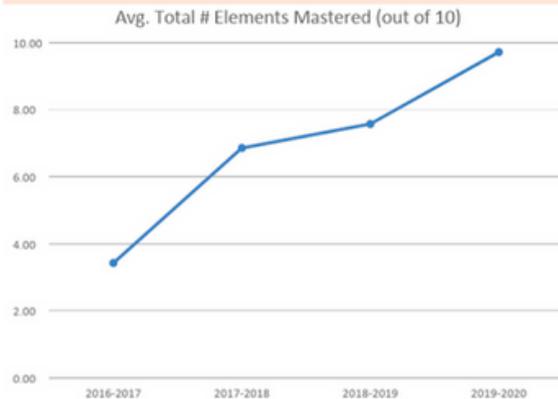
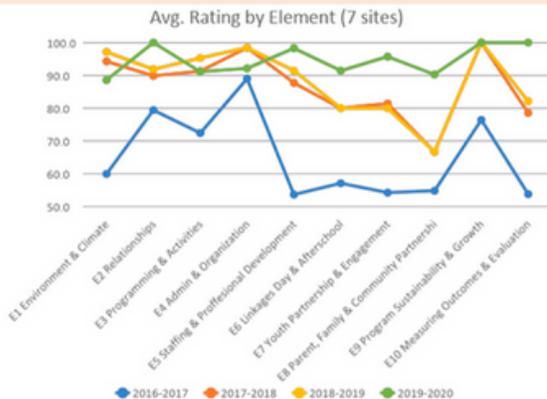
AQuA Data Across Years

- Big Thought and Dallas Afterschool developed an out of school-focused pacing guide for Sanford Harmony, an SEL explicit skills curriculum for elementary grade levels. The OST Pacing Guide is meant to supplement (not duplicate) in-school Sanford Harmony lessons during afterschool time by providing literacy-based activities and reflection questions. [OST Pacing Guide Example Lesson](#)
- All Phase I sites have established collaborative, functioning SEL Steering Committees (inclusive of in- and out of school representation) that guide planning, progress towards goals, and ongoing refinement of SEL practices on their respective campuses. See Steering Committee information in Section V.

SEL Dallas OST program quality has increased.

- All 3 years of SEL Dallas implementation (17-18 to 19-20) has shown higher quality programs than baseline (2016-17)
- 6 of 7 sites have reached “Certified” status

- Since 2016-17 there has been a 183% increase in the average number of elements a site masters.



- SEL Dallas had developed a robust set of communication tools and resources including the SEL Dallas website, Resource Portal for Phase I staff members, monthly SEL newsletter for Phase I staff and external partners, and related SEL Dallas collateral (presentation templates, branded materials for Phase I sites, etc.).
- SEL Dallas finalized a set of SEL Learning Standards to help describe what we want students (and adults) to know and do within each competency.

The PSELI grant in Dallas is expected to end in summer 2023. Our partnership's collective learning and resource development during the PSELI study has shaped our Guidebook content and recommendations and will serve as a catalyst for future implementation efforts across Dallas.



SEL DALLAS APPROACH

SEL DALLAS GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We have identified four guiding principles as the collective “North Star” of our SEL implementation efforts: Relationships, Environment, Resilience and Engagement.



DEFINING COMPREHENSIVE SEL

We define comprehensive social and emotional learning as implementing four key components of SEL practices:



Climate and Culture

Building welcoming, safe and supportive environments for both students and staff members to foster learning and personal growth. A positive campus climate and culture sets the tone for youth and adults, and are the foundation for modeling and practicing SEL. Culture and climate examples include welcoming students / staff members at the start of the day or the start of programming, creating group norms through respect agreements, and encouraging students / staff members to use designated calming areas if they begin to feel stressed, anxious, or overwhelmed. We also include facilitating SEL Signature Practices as an important component of a positive culture and climate. Signature Practices have three primary elements: welcoming activities, engaging practices, and optimistic closures. Together, they reinforce skill-acquisition of SEL competencies and can be used during any group learning opportunity such as during class time, in staff meetings, and during after school activities."



Family Engagement

We know that parents and caregivers are the first teachers of social and emotional learning for their children, and therefore, partnering with families to support SEL skill development across all facets of a child's life, including at home, is an integral part of community-wide SEL growth. Some examples include sharing information about emotions and brain development with parents and caregivers, and adapting in- and out of school time practices for at-home use such as creating a calming area at home or developing a family treatment agreement to agree on family-wide expectations.



explicit skills
instruction

SEL Explicit Skills Instruction

Teaching the five SEL competencies through a selected curricular program, which guides students through explicit naming and practicing to develop key SEL skills like positive relationship-building or listening to others' perspectives, among others.

SEL Dallas sites are implementing either Sanford Harmony or Leader in Me as their explicit skills curriculum. CASEL has also developed a Program Guide with curriculum recommendations, inclusive of all grade levels.

Content Integration



content
integration

Infusing SEL connections with ongoing learning, including specific subjects (math, reading, social studies, science, etc.) and / or activities (service projects, games and play, arts projects, etc.). Reminding students of regular connections between learning and SEL skills provides context and brings relevance to skill acquisition.

Content integration examples include a writing prompt exploring the values of friendship, project-based learning that develops student voice and leadership, or art projects where students explore and share aspects of their identity (and learn about the identity of others).

SEL Dallas has finalized a set of SEL Learning standards to help describe what we want students (and adults) to know and do within each competency.

BUILDING & LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE BENEFIT OF SEL IMPLEMENTATION

Although the PSELI grant was limited to a select set of organizational partners and key staff member roles, future SEL implementation across Dallas will continue to evolve and look different for each campus and OST program. Based on our PSELI grant experience, we highly encourage in- and out of school time partners to work together whenever possible to embed and align SEL practices and approaches across both student-facing learning experience as well as adult training and operations.

We recommend that sites review their partnerships (and potential partnerships) to design a full continuum of SEL-focused experiences for students and adults: before the school day, during school hours, during out-of-school-time, and extending into the community and at home. Along that continuum of experiences, adults should consider what comprehensive SEL looks like in each of those spaces, what planning efforts may be needed to implement all four areas of comprehensive SEL, and finally, what connection points are needed across different “spaces” and partners to build a consistent and aligned set of SEL focused experiences. Ultimately, the goal is to build intentional reinforcement of adult SEL practices and student SEL skill-building across an entire day and across all learning opportunities at a campus.

With that context in mind, each campus will have a unique set of partners, teams of staff members, student populations, and families / caregivers. Here are a few guiding questions to begin building cross-cutting partnerships to focus on SEL planning and implementation:

- At a given campus / site, who are the partners who directly serve students?
Inventory site-based organizations and groups who may be valuable contributors to this work.

- What does each partner do in terms of academics, programming, enrichment and / or outreach and engagement?
- How might SEL practices “show up” in each of these programs or partnerships? What are the opportunities to embed SEL practices in student-facing learning opportunities (as well as in adult learning and planning, too)?
- How often do partners collaborate with each other already (if at all)? What processes and meeting times can be identified to foster cross-partner collaboration around SEL implementation?
- What are the goals and priorities of each partner? Are there any common youth-focused goals across partners? And how do those priorities connect to social and emotional learning?
- Who is committed to SEL implementation and to what extent are partners committed to the work of SEL knowledge-building, planning, and continuous improvement?

The questions above are meant to jump start reflection and preliminary thinking about the alignment of in- and out-of-school-time SEL practices at a given campus.

IN & OUT OF SCHOOL TIME PARTNERSHIP

ORGANIZATION ROLES

Our work is stronger when done in partnership and a key component of effective IST and OST partnership is aligned objectives and clear roles. For the PSELI grant, here are the roles that our in/out of school partners played at both the system and campus levels. These can be used as a guide when defining your own set of partners and roles.



Dallas Independent School District

The Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) sits in the heart of a large, diverse and dynamic region and comprises 384 square miles. Dallas ISD is the second-largest public school district in the state of Texas, and the 14th-largest district in the nation. Dallas ISD serves as the lead educational partner and co-fiscal agent for the PSELI grant in Dallas. The Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Department oversees social and emotional learning implementation for the district, including PSELI grant implementation, with the goal of scaling these critical systems and practices district-wide by 2025. Dallas ISD's Extended Learning Opportunities Department is also an integral partner in supporting the out of school time components of the work.



Big Thought

Big Thought is an impact education organization focused on closing the opportunity gap and equipping all youth in marginalized communities with the skills, competencies, and experiences necessary for them to imagine and create their best lives and world. Big Thought serves as the co-fiscal agent of the PSELI grant, along with Dallas ISD, overseeing the coordination and implementation of the grant with a focus on the out of school time components. Big Thought shares, in collaboration with Dallas Afterschool, the out-of-school time intermediary functions of the project, providing on-site coaching and technical assistance, co-creating and delivering professional development and curricular resources.



Dallas Afterschool

Dallas Afterschool has a mission to increase the quality and availability of afterschool and summer programs in the Dallas community. Dallas Afterschool works with 35 different nonprofits and over 180 afterschool and summer program sites annually to provide coaching, training and resources through their Program Quality Initiative to ensure that programs are more likely to observe positive outcomes for students. Dallas Afterschool, shares in collaboration with Big Thought, the out of school time intermediary functions, supporting program quality, and co-creating and delivering professional development and curricular resources.



City of Dallas Park & Recreation

The Dallas Park and Recreation Department offers after school programming at select Dallas ISD partnering schools, including 5 of the 7 PSELI grant Phase I sites, providing academic and recreational programs that expose youth to a wide variety of activities that will help broaden their interest and challenge them to learn and master new skills; thus increasing self-esteem. Dallas Park and Recreation plays an integral role in implementing SEL practices, testing tools and resources, and providing feedback.

STAFF ROLES

In School Roles

Principal:

The instructional leader of a campus, the Principal must embody and model social and emotional learning to ensure campus-wide buy-in and continuous improvement efforts (for both staff members and students). This leader ensures that all campus staff members and relevant stakeholders have ongoing opportunities to become knowledgeable around the value, benefit, and practices of SEL, as well as guides SEL planning, goal setting, and implementation efforts for his/her campus.

SEL Champion(s):

The principal of a campus identifies one or more staff members to contribute to campus-wide SEL planning, skill building, and ongoing development of SEL-focused systems and processes. SEL Champions may be teachers, counselors, and/or assistant principals, and are selected to support campus leadership by participating in SEL Steering Committees and supporting professional development efforts. By identifying one or more SEL Champions, principals can build greater capacity and develop a team of adults focused on embedding SEL into all aspects of a campus (academics, operations, family engagement, training and development, etc.).

Dallas ISD SEL Coordinator:

The SEL Coordinator is a central office staff member, representing the Social and Emotional Learning department, who serves as a consultant and facilitator for campuses implementing SEL. The coordinator provides a combination of ongoing training, coaching, observations/feedback, and strategic planning support for campus-based SEL implementation. The coordinator also partners closely with campus leadership, SEL Steering Committee, and the SEL Specialist (see below), to support campus capacity-building and implementation.

Out of School Time Roles

Quality Advisor:

The Quality Advisor assesses the safety and quality of afterschool programming, so that students can thrive, while also supporting afterschool partners to improve SEL implementation through coaching, training, curriculum, technical assistance, and teaching resources (both at the site-level and school-wide).

OST Recreation Supervisor:

The OST Supervisor develops and implements quality recreation programs that meet the needs of the public as well as the long and short-term goals of the district. This role has been influential with out of school time staff buy-in of the SEL framework and practices. OST leadership has designated time and opportunities for direct staff to receive SEL professional development and consultation of SEL best practices.

OST Site Lead:

The OST site lead supports OST leadership with site level program quality, compliance, and SEL implementation. Site leads are front line staff trained extensively on the SEL framework; they act as thought partners to the SEL Specialists in developing practical and proficient elements that would overall positively impact the culture in which the program is run.

SEL Specialist:

The SEL Specialist assists schools with cultivating an environment and culture that supports, teaches, and reinforces the SEL framework during the school day and during out of school time. The specialist provides oversight of SEL implementation and coordination at a given campus, while supporting OST partners with programmatic development and compliance for an optimized impact of SEL.

BEST PRACTICES FOR DEVELOPING STRONG IN-SCHOOL AND OUT OF SCHOOL (OST) TIME PARTNERSHIPS

The SEL Dallas team has outlined the following list of best practices to build collaborative partnerships that support sustainability and develop aligned SEL programs, practices, professional development, and related coaching for successful SEL implementation at a campus.

Best Practice 1: Establish consistent and honest communication from the start of the partnership.

All partners should describe their goals for students and staff, priorities, and information about what their “typical day” looks like or other general operating expectations. Regular communication also provides all partners with the chance to share feedback on progress and / or identify if there are opportunities for improvement. Consider scheduling regular check-in times among relevant partners to ensure that SEL-focused conversations are timely, relevant, and iterative over the course of a school year.

Implementation Recommendations

Develop Initial Vision and Priority-Setting:

At the start of the school year, encourage both in- and out of school time leaders to meet and discuss the overarching vision, guiding principles, priorities, and common messaging around SEL at their campus to then share widely with school-based and external partners.

Ensure Common Language:

Remember to identify common language and clarify SEL terminology for both in- and out of school time leadership and staff members so that everyone “speaks the same language” in regards to training, reflection, and continuous improvement of SEL practices at your campus. If a campus has specific culture practices (a chant, greeting, house system, etc.), share that information with OST partners to potentially incorporate into afterschool programming.

Understand Roles & Responsibilities:

Clarify and standardize partner roles and responsibilities, especially to refine the capacity of SEL Specialists (or other out of school time coaching / training partners) as they connect out of school time planning and training with in-school efforts. Continue to clarify roles and responsibilities as needed as SEL implementation evolves.

Schedule Check-In Time:

Lead regular check-in meetings and ongoing planning discussions among multiple levels of in- and out of school time stakeholders (campus principals, assistant principals, district SEL Coordinator, instructional coaches, OST leaders, parent / family representatives, etc.) For example, Big Thought facilitated weekly meetings with Out of School Time Partners and In-School Partners to build community with each other, discuss campus SEL updates, troubleshoot and support SEL implementation, and conduct overall planning for SEL during the school year.

Best Practice 2: Align In and Out of School Time training and goal-setting to provide consistency for students and staff.

When in-school and OST partners align their time and efforts around common SEL training and subsequent continuous improvement, the entire campus strengthens its collective SEL knowledge and reinforces student SEL skill development across an entire school day (for example, all staff members at a campus are focused on implementing Signature Practices during the fall semester). We recommend inviting in-school and OST leadership to all SEL implementation discussions and related decision-making meetings to ensure that multiple perspectives are shared and common goals are identified for an entire campus.

Implementation Recommendations

Implement Comprehensive SEL:

Provide training and subsequent coaching around the application of all four primary elements of our approach: culture and climate, explicit skills instruction (Sanford Harmony or another designated SEL-focused curriculum), content integration, and family engagement. (Welcoming Activities, Engaging Practices, and Optimistic Closures). Depending on the SEL skill and knowledge level of the campus, goals and training may be scaffolded over time to allow for emphasis in one or two areas of the approach before moving on to mastering one or two other areas of the approach.

Schedule Ongoing Learning Time:

Note that SEL training and learning should be an ongoing and iterative process, therefore it may be useful to schedule recurring SEL-focused training time during the school year, build into staff meeting agendas, etc.

Collaborate with External Support:

Facilitate ongoing site-based support for campuses by having consistent collaboration with SEL Coordinator from Dallas ISD and SEL Site Coordinator from Big Thought (or other OST representative).

Implement an In / Out of School Time Pacing Guide for Explicit Skills:

Establish and implement a pacing guide for Sanford Harmony (or other designated SEL curriculum) to align explicit skill instruction during in- and out of school time. It is also beneficial to share expectations and timing around SEL explicit skills instruction (ex: explicit skills instruction every Tuesday, September will be focused on Unit 2, etc.) so that explicit SEL concepts are reinforced throughout the school day and during after school time.

Apply SEL Learning Standards:

Use SEL Learning Standards to clarify what students and adults should know and do within each of the five SEL competencies as well as provide ongoing support, coaching, and reflection around content integration with SEL.

Best Practice 3: Build an SEL Steering Committee with diverse representation.

When you recruit participants for a Steering Committee, remember to include all relevant in- and out of school time partners who may contribute to SEL implementation, training development, and refinement of practices. The Steering Committee is also a capacity-building opportunity to build a larger team of SEL experts on a campus and collect multi-faceted input around decision-making. (See Section V for detailed information on Steering Committees)

Implementation Recommendations

Establish an SEL Steering Committee:

Establish a new group (or designate a current campus-based Culture and Climate committee, other structure committee) to build campus leadership, buy-in, and capacity around SEL implementation. At the start of the year, develop a schedule of meetings for the entire school year to ensure that participants honor that time in their schedules.

Review Multiple Data Sources:

During Steering Committee meetings, review multiple sources of data (student behavior, Dallas ISD climate surveys, and OST program quality data) to inform decision-making and planning. Note that Out of School Time utilizes different evaluation methods for continuous improvement including but not limited to AQuA and Six Dimensions of Quality (6DQ).

Best Practice 4: Identify ongoing opportunities to communicate the value and progress of SEL implementation as well as contributions of each partner.

Campuses and OST programs may have various avenues for communicating about their work: regular staff meetings, parent / family events, social media, online / print newsletters, and other announcements.

Implementation Recommendations

Leverage Current Communication Avenues:

Consider incorporating ongoing SEL updates and partner highlights via current communication methods for the benefit of staff members, parents and caregivers, and students. Messages may be tailored for different audiences (staff, students, parents / caregivers) but an ongoing emphasis on SEL news and progress demonstrates a commitment to SEL implementation and growth.

Facilitate opportunities for in- and out of school time to showcase their respective strengths and expertise:

Consider asking in- and out of school time staff members to share their favorite welcoming activities to build a campus-based SEL resource bank, host a “back to school” event for in- and out of school staff to meet each other, encourage in- and out of school staff to visit their partners for a learning walk (for example, having in-school staff visit a day of afterschool programming to see how SEL is incorporated in the program). All of these touchpoints allow staff members to develop relationships, see SEL practices applied in different ways, and support students in experiencing a cohesive continuum of SEL practices across their day.

SEL IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS: GETTING STARED

CASEL's guidance has taught us that schools are more effective at teaching and reinforcing SEL for students when they also cultivate SEL competencies in adults. Your sites implementation plan will likely call on many adults - from teachers to lunchroom staff to out-of-school time partners - to take an active role in learning about and promoting SEL. It's critically important that school wide SEL implementation intentionally nurtures a work environment in which staff gains social and emotional competence through learning, collaborating, and modeling their social and emotional skills. It's recommended that schools continuously assess their needs surrounding adult SEL and establish systems and supports that strengthen both adult and student SEL.

Focus Areas 2 of CASEL's School Guide provides much guidance on adult SEL, but here are a few checkpoints to get started:

- Staff identify and reflect on their own social and emotional learning competencies
- Leadership models and encourages self-care practices across the entire campus.
- All staff members study and reflect on equitable practices, including strategies for educators and parents on having conversations with young people in school and at home about race, racism, racial violence, understanding biases, and how to advocate for racial justice.

Where an out-of-school program exists, additional collaboration opportunities exist, including:

- Group workshops with content aligned to in-school partners
- Weekly professional development with front-line staff workers
- OST collaboration with in-school partners within the campus steering committee
- Collaboration between OST and in-school leadership in development of the campus SEL goals.

IMPLEMENTATION STAGES

The goal of implementing SEL is to ensure that SEL practices and systems are firmly integrated into all operational aspects of the school. This is most likely to be achieved with a strong commitment to SEL implementation by all stakeholders and a common understanding that becoming an SEL campus is a long-term process. Our team has developed three primary implementation stages (Launching, Developing, and Sustaining) with indicators of progress at each stage. Each campus should reflect on its current status (or progress over time) through the [SEL Implementation Tool](#) to identify its implementation stage and to assist with the development of SEL goals.

Launching Campus

A launching campus is at the beginning stages of SEL implementation and staff members are focused on learning about SEL competencies and skills, establishing systems and structures that create a climate and culture conducive to furthering SEL, and adopting the transformational mindsets necessary to implement comprehensive SEL. Depending on the results of its [SEL Implementation Tool](#), a launching campus may not choose to begin explicit skills instruction during its first year of implementing SEL practices and approaches. Here you'll find additional guidance for campuses at the [Launching](#) phase of implementation.

Developing Campus

A developing campus sustains the preliminary SEL practices and systems from its initial implementation year, and focuses on refining SEL knowledge and campus-wide systems. Depending on capacity, a developing campus may begin rolling out regular, campus-wide SEL explicit skills and participate in training around content integration. Here you'll find additional guidance for campuses at the [Developing](#) phase of implementation.

Sustaining Campus

A sustaining campus has reached a high-level of campus-based leadership, knowledge, and facilitation around social and emotional learning. The campus is sustaining practices and systems from previous years and drives its own SEL goal setting, planning, and progress monitoring. The SEL Steering Committee actively incorporates and monitors SEL practices on their campus, facilitates effective decision-making around campus-driven SEL goals and priorities, and intentionally guides students and staff in continual learning around SEL. Moreover, the campus develops strong partnerships with parents and, caregivers, and community partners by sharing ongoing SEL information and leading SEL-related engagement opportunities. Support from Dallas ISD's SEL department includes SEL Coordinator-led consultation and coaching, professional development, and access to department resources. Here you'll find additional guidance for campuses at the Sustaining phase of implementation.

With explicit instruction alignment in mind, Big Thought and Dallas Afterschool co-developed an OST Pacing Guide, using the Sanford Harmony Focus Areas and the Dallas ISD weekly themes. The OST Pacing Guide consists of weekly lessons with four components: Literacy, Extension Activity, Hands-On Activity, and Guiding Questions and Reflection (Integration). OST Pacing Guide Lesson Example

BEST PRACTICES TO GUIDE SEL IMPLEMENTATION EFFORTS

In School Practices

- Establish a steering committee team with inclusive membership (see details in Section V of this Guide).
- Endeavor to create a welcoming, safe and nurturing environment campus wide to set the stage for explicit skills instruction.
- Maintain a strong collaboration between in- and out- of- school- time for professional development and related SEL implementation decision-making.
- Evaluate community partnerships ensuring that they support SEL goals and efforts.
- Evaluate discipline practices to ensure they are “supportive discipline” practices.
- Review SEL goals and implementation progress regularly and share with stakeholders.
- Adopt the mindset that SEL supports academic success and is an integral part of all systems and practices.
- Find opportunities to collaborate with community partners and other SEL implementer’s as part of continuous improvement and deepening adult SEL acquisition.
- Expect adults to model SEL in all interactions: (e.g., adult- to- adult, adult- to- student),
- Engage in additional foundational studies on topics such as trauma-informed care, growth mindset, culturally responsive teaching practices, self-care / well-being, mindfulness, etc.
- Identify featured campus SEL practices and ensure they are practiced in all areas of campus life, including common areas and OST environment (e.g. signature practices - (see Appendix), calming areas, respect agreements, emotional check-ins, threshold greetings, etc.).

Out of School Time Practices

- Ensure that space is allocated and conducive to accommodate the programming and logistical considerations of the OST environment.
- Provide guidance in collaboration with the district to effectively implement a social and emotional learning initiative; by which children and adults develop essential emotional and social competencies and experiences.
- Develop and maintain strong collaborative relationships between in- and out- of- school- time for professional development and related SEL implementation matters.
- Support school-wide implementation of the SEL program, including standards, staff development, curriculum, and assessment.
- Model and adopt the mindset that SEL supports academic success and is an essential part of all systems and school climate.
- Seek out opportunities to collaborate with in- school partners as part of continuous improvement and deepening the adult practice of SEL.
- Train on correlated content such as trauma-informed care, growth mindset, culturally responsive teaching practices, self-care / well-being and, mindfulness, which reinforces and enhances the understanding of SEL.
- Adapt and support the SEL programs within the schools and provide leadership for work to build and deepen a positive school climate and culture.
- Align programming to ensure that featured campus SEL practices are reflected in the OST environment.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED TOPICS OF STUDY

Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students (Zaretta Hammond):

Advances in neuroscience have led educators to better understand how the brain learns and leaves educators with this truth: All students are wired for expansive learning and self-determination. Culturally responsive teaching is necessary for optimizing learning opportunities. This book improves the awareness of educators to adopt strategies that bring relevance to the diverse students in our classrooms in order to support engagement and sense-making. The author has strong research around literacy, vocabulary development, and equity, and has designed culturally responsive tutor training programs aimed at volunteer reading tutors for a variety of nonprofit organizations. Additional information on the topic can be found on Hammond's blog: ready4rigor.com

The Morning Meeting Book (Roxann Kriete, Carol Davis - Responsive Classroom)The Power of Our Words (Paula Denton, EdD):

This book illustrates that language is one of the most powerful tools educators have to open the doors of possibilities for students. Our words become effective tools when we pay attention to our choice of words and tone of voice. The author presents compelling research and explanations that cause examination of habits and beliefs that can be barriers to student engagement and success. Examples of effective language provide a reference for educators to adopt that can transform classroom instruction toward SEL supported, student-centered learning.

Book studies:

Campus leadership can facilitate collective studies on selected initiatives through book studies. This practice provides a focused alignment of selected topics among educators, broadens learning, and improves teaching skills as educators read, explore, discuss, and reflect on common topics. Campuses can include OST and other community partners in the book studies to strengthen the circle of learning.

Developing Academic Mindsets:

Academic mindsets are beliefs or ways of perceiving oneself in relation to learning, and lay the groundwork for deep academic, social and emotional learning. These mindsets are adopted by adults and children, through continuous reflection and discussion.

- I belong in this academic community. Students who feel a sense of belonging in their schools and classrooms demonstrate higher levels of competencies such as self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation.
- My ability and competence grow with my effort. As explained in Carol Dweck’s groundbreaking work on the subject, a “growth mindset” leads to the belief that we can improve with effort and new strategies, and that struggle is part of the process. These beliefs encourage students to practice and develop the social and emotional skills to stay motivated, set goals, and reflect on progress. By contrast, students (and adults) who see intelligence as “fixed” view struggle as a sign of inferiority and something to be avoided or disguised. For more on the Carol Dweck’s work, visit Mindset Works.
- I can succeed at this. Believing that one can be successful leads to increased effort and engagement, creating a positive feedback loop between hard work, mastery, and increased self-efficacy beliefs.
- This work has value for me. Learners are naturally motivated when they find a task compelling or see connections between the learning and their personal aspirations.
- For additional resources, see [Academic Mindsets](#), an instructional handout with signs for classroom use.

SYSTEMS, STRUCTURES, AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

SEL STEERING COMMITTEE

Although it will always be crucial to train adults on SEL practices and related information (neuroscience, trauma-informed practices and approaches, best practices for facilitating out of school enrichment time, etc.), training alone cannot guide campus growth and expertise in SEL implementation. For teams to successfully reach their designated SEL goals and save time and space for iterative improvements, campuses will need to set up sustainable systems, structures, and leadership. Moreover, SEL cannot be the sole responsibility of a principal or only one person at a campus so it is valuable to develop a team with collective responsibility around leading SEL efforts at a site.

PURPOSE

The SEL Steering Committee serves the following functions:

SEL Goal Setting:

Develop collective SEL goals with input from in-school and out-of-school-time partners.

- Consider using a document like the [SEL Roadmap](#) for identifying goals and actions steps. Additionally, CASEL has developed [SMARTIE goal guidance](#) to help with designing clear, actionable SEL goals.
- We encourage steering committees to review their goals during regular meetings to reflect on needs, progress, and next steps.
- Remember to communicate campus SEL goals across all in- and out-of-school-time staff members so that everyone is knowledgeable about SEL focus areas. Consider incorporating specific SEL goals into Campus Improvement Plans.

SEL Implementation Planning:

Identify action steps to reach campus-defined SEL goals such as scheduling training for staff, identifying point people to prepare for and facilitate SEL Steering Committee meetings, scheduling and facilitating campus learning walks for observing SEL practices, etc.

Data Review for Continuous Improvement:

Review campus data regularly (e.g., discipline, attendance, stakeholder survey results, and SEL implementation efforts); facilitate the capacity of practitioners to reflect on and use different data sources; and discuss continuous improvement efforts based on data and campus trends.

SEL Modeling and Advocacy:

Model SEL practices whenever possible (e.g., signature practices in meetings, etc.) and encourage other adults to do so as well.

- Advocate for ongoing refinement of SEL practices at the campus/site for the benefit of students and staff members.
- Continue learning about SEL practices and related topics to inform continuous improvement efforts, support students and staff members, and collect new best practices.

HOW TO CREATE A TEAM

The SEL Steering Committee can be a separate group or combined with a campus committee charged with overseeing the climate and culture of the campus. The team should consist of:

1. At least five diverse members of the campus community including, but not limited to: an administrator, a counselor, an out-of-school-time representative, the campus community liaison, teachers that represent different grade-levels and electives, support staff, a community member and/or parent, and/or student(s).

- a. When forming the team, consider the following guiding questions:
 - Does this team represent all key stakeholders on campus and in the community?
 - Does this team have a healthy balance of people that have the capacity to do the work vs. manage the work?
- b. Consider forming a separate student SEL Steering Committee, and schedule combined meetings as appropriate to incorporate student voice in campus/site decision-making.

2. At least one champion and co-champion, designated by campus leadership.

Both Champions should participate as members of the steering committee.

a. Roles of the Champion and Co-Champion: Organize and facilitate the SEL Steering Committee meetings, support the SEL team in keeping the campus on track to achieve implementation goals, and serve as the main points of contact with Dallas ISD SEL Coordinator.

b. Role of Lead Administrator: Advocates for and ensures alignment between SEL and overall school improvement efforts, communicates SEL initiatives to the leadership team and entire campus, and serves as the main point of contact for the Dallas ISD SEL Coordinator to organize schoolwide professional development.

STEERING COMMITTEE ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND BEST PRACTICES

Roles & Responsibilities:

Establish collaborative roles for steering committee meetings such as meeting facilitator, notetaker/timekeeper, and greeter/closer. Outlining these roles (and rotating responsibilities for these roles each meeting) is a great way to promote equity of voice, leadership, and adult practice of SEL.

Defining clear roles and responsibilities helps ensure that everyone on the team feels a sense of ownership and belonging, and knows how to best support the work. It also helps to create productive team meetings and share the work equitably.

- Note that the role of SEL “champion” is not synonymous with sole decision-maker. Instead, the team can be most productive when allowing feedback from multiple stakeholders, using both qualitative and quantitative data to inform.

Distributive Leadership:

As a best practice for any group meeting, be sure to clarify what the next steps are before closing each steering committee meeting and ensure that responsibilities are distributed across members of the group to avoid overloading one or two members with additional responsibilities.

SEL Modeling:

Remember to model SEL signature practices during steering committee meetings (welcoming, engaging practices, and optimistic closures) so that these practices become an established meeting norm. Visit the Appendix for more SEL Signature Practice information and ideas.

Meeting Materials:

We recommend that meeting materials be saved in a shared folder (e.g., Google Drive or Dropbox folder) for campus staff and external partners to access, review, and edit as needed.

BUILD A STRONG TEAM DYNAMIC

- The SEL Steering Committee serves as a model for positive and productive practices that promote healthy relationships among adults, students, and families. It's highly beneficial to build a strong team dynamic and positive working relationship by developing (and adhering to) group norms and team routines.
- For professional development related to building a healthy team, please contact the [Social and Emotional Learning department](#).

PRELIMINARY STEPS

In summary, here are key tasks for beginning SEL implementation at your campus with your SEL Steering Committee:

- The principal and key campus leadership should reflect on their campus status with their Dallas ISD SEL Coordinator using the SEL Implementation Tool. This reflection can happen either at the end of the school year to inform planning for the next school year or at the beginning of a new school year.
- Recruit SEL Steering Committee members, inclusive of in- and out-of-school-time representatives.
- Schedule steering committee meetings for the upcoming school year. We recommend meeting at least once every six weeks, if not monthly.
- Once the [SEL Implementation Tool](#) is complete, convene your steering committee to identify SEL goals (using [SEL Roadmap template](#)). During the school year, reflect on progress made towards the identified SEL goals during committee meetings, and ask steering committee members for feedback and troubleshooting advice.
- Participate in ongoing Principal / Dallas ISD SEL Coordinator check-in meetings to discuss SEL progress, successes, and challenges each semester.

Here are the resources for the appendix:

1. [Meeting Agenda Template](#)
2. [Meeting Agenda Sample](#)
3. [Sample Committee Meeting Worksheet \(Recruiting team members and designing collaborative Steering Committee meetings\)](#)
4. [Sample SEL Timeline and Checklist](#)

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TOOLS

SEL Implementation Tool:

The SEL Implementation Tool is a key tool for reflection and guiding implementation progress on a campus. The survey is not meant to “grade” campuses in SEL progress but rather serve as a planning and discussion tool around what strong SEL implementation “looks and feels like” on a campus. District SEL Coordinators facilitate reflection discussions with campus leaders at the start, middle, and end of the school year to guide broad goal setting and reflection for a campus. ([SEL Implementation Tool](#))

SEL Roadmap:

The campus SEL Roadmap provides an opportunity to map out action steps, team member responsibilities, and timing for site-based SEL goals. Roadmap goals are developed by campus SEL leadership in collaboration with community partners, OST representatives, and a district SEL representative. The Roadmap supplements the SEL Implementation Tool by outlining more detail and step-by-step action planning to break down large goals into achievable steps and tasks. ([SEL Roadmap](#))

Afterschool Quality Advancement:

Afterschool Quality Advancement (AQuA) contains research-based best practices for operating a high quality afterschool program. The rigorous AQuA tool consists of 74 indicators grouped into 10 elements, which cover a variety of topics from relationships to fundraising.

AQuA's best practices are grouped into the following categories:

- 1.Environment & Climate
- 2.Relationships
- 3.Programming & Activities
- 4.Administration & Organization
- 5.Staffing & Professional Development
- 6.Linkages Between Day and Afterschool
- 7.Youth Participation & Engagement
- 8.Parent, Family & Community Partnerships
- 9.Program Sustainability & Growth
- 10.Measuring Outcomes

Dallas Afterschool supports its clients in their efforts to master all of these quality elements and achieve certification. Some indicators are measured at a site level, others at the organizational level, and the remaining indicators receive a score at both levels (in those cases, the lower of the two scores is selected). There are four performance levels in AQuA, ranging from “1” (the lowest) to “4” (the highest). A score of “3” is needed to pass an indicator. Any score of “1” or more than one “2”, in an element will keep a site from mastering that element. All 10 elements must be mastered to reach certification.

Organizational indicator scores are captured in a separate interview with organization leadership. Site indicators are addressed at the site assessment, which includes an interview (typically completed 1 hour prior to programming) and an observation of one afternoon of programming.

The full AQuA tool is distributed to all partners, containing a breakdown of each of the 74 indicators. This breakdown details what is needed in each indicator for the various scoring levels. This allows each site to look up what each indicator looks like according to best practices.

For more information on AQuA, please feel free to reach out to the Dallas Afterschool Director of Research and Evaluation, Lauren Ammons at lammons@dallasafterschool.org or (214) 546-1292

Six Dimensions of Quality Teaching and Learning

Six Dimensions of Quality Teaching and Learning (6DQ) was created in 2006 by members of the Dallas arts and science education community who serve children in and out of school. As a community, the partners of Big Thought sought a collective understanding for what constitutes high-quality teaching and learning. By teaching and learning, we specifically mean the instruction that takes place, and the interaction between the instructor and students.

We believe that when we engage in high-quality teaching and learning, we increase students' ability to explore and solve problems, design a better future, express themselves, experience beauty, imagine possibilities, and be inspired. Research shows that creative children have more consistent school attendance, higher academic achievement, and may be primed for greater leadership and community involvement.

To reap these benefits, educators and students must engage in high-quality teaching and learning. The 6DQ rubric is used as a guide to help instructors craft lesson plans, administrators design programs, observers rate teaching, and for coaches to support continual improvement of instruction.

The Six Dimensions are:

Supports for Learning

1. Climate that Supports Learning
2. Engagement and Investment in Learning Resources for Creativity and Innovations

Resources for Creativity and Innovations

3. Classroom Dialogue and Sharing
4. Skills, Techniques, and Knowledge of the Discipline
5. Creative Choices
6. Expectations, Assessment and Recognition

To learn more about the Six Dimensions of Quality Teaching and Learning, visit www.creatingquality.org.

OST Notes

OST Coaching/Feedback Model

The Weikart Center's Assess/Plan/Improve Model and Observation Reflection Method <https://forumfyi.org/weikart-center/ypqi/>

OST Professional Learning Series

Youth Work Methods Series

Youth Work Methods offers two to three-hour workshops delivered using the participatory learning method that is central to our philosophy. The topics align with the items of the PQA tool and provide frontline staff with practical skills that they can implement immediately.

YEAR 1

Series of six half- and full-day trainings focused on SEL overview and adult acquisition

YEAR 2

School Year Kickoff, Second Semester Kickoff, Summer Kickoff

Learning Walks

Learning walks are an opportunity for a diverse team of participants, including school leaders, teachers, OST partners, external partners, among others, to observe current SEL practices at a campus and collectively share their observations and learning for continual improvement. Learning walks are not meant to penalize site staff; they serve as a chance to observe which SEL practices are currently being applied and to what degree, and to understand site-based innovations and iterations in applying SEL practices to specific learning environments. This is a useful strategy to inform SEL Steering Committee and leadership decision-making around site strengths, needs, and ongoing professional development for SEL implementation.

Resources

- a. [Learning walk protocol](#) (adapted from the University of Pittsburgh "Principles of Learning")
- b. [SEL Dallas Learning Walk observation tool](#)

APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL SEL RESOURCES & PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Local Partners

[Big Thought](#)

[City of Dallas: Park & Recreation](#)

[Dallas Afterschool](#)

[Dallas ISD: Extended Learning Opportunities Department](#)

[Dallas ISD: Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Department](#)

National Organizations

[Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#)

[RAND Corporation](#)

[Turnaround for Children](#)

[David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality](#)

[The Wallace Foundation](#)

[Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence](#)

SEL Implementation Resources

[CASEL School Guide](#)

[SEL Dallas](#)

Family Engagement

- [CASEL Tools and Strategies for Establishing School Family Partnerships](#)
- [SEL Family Engagement Toolkit](#)

SEL Research/Policy Briefs

- [The Evidence Base for How We Learn: Supporting Students' Social, Emotional, and Academic Development \(The Aspen Institute\)](#)
- [From A Nation at Risk to A Nation at Hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development \(The Aspen Institute\)](#)
- [Principal Pipelines: Building pipelines of effective \(The Wallace Foundation\)](#)

Recommended Reading

- [Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students by Zaretta Hammond](#)
- [The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups by Daniel Coyle](#)
- [Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead by Brene Brown](#)
- [The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity by Nadine Burke Harris, MD](#)
- [Mindset: The New Psychology of Success by Carol S. Dweck, PhD](#)
- [Permission to Feel: Unlocking the Power of Emotions to Help Our Kids, Ourselves, and Our Society Thrive by Marc Brackett](#)
- [The Power of Our Words: Teacher Language that Helps Children Learn by Paula Denton](#)
- [Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World by Vivek H Murthy M.D.](#)

ADDITIONAL SEL DALLAS FRAMEWORK RESOURCES

Culture & Climate | SEL Signature Practices | SEL Explicit Skills Instruction | Content Integration

Culture & Climate

Everyone contributes to building their campus climate and culture; leadership, however, plays a strong role in developing a positive (or negative) climate and culture for both students and staff members. Because campus climate and culture-building are an ongoing, dynamic process, leaders need to always be intentional about how they are actively fostering a positive environment and which practices contribute to their campus climate and culture.

The SEL Steering Committee can support the ongoing development of healthy campus culture through implementation of SEL practices (for both staff and students) and feedback for continual improvement. It is valuable to collect both qualitative and quantitative feedback to inform decision-making and build collaborative, inclusive learning environments where both students and staff members can thrive. Remember to develop alignment between in- and out-of-school spaces by including school-based climate practices (e.g., chants, cheers, house systems, etc.) in afterschool programs and vice versa.

Calming Areas:

A calming area is a quiet area of a room equipped with resources to help a student or adult de-escalate and/or practice self-management when upset, frustrated, or feeling overwhelmed. Calming areas may also be called calming zones, peace areas, or peace corners, but the primary goal is the same across all names: provide a quiet, private place for individuals to pause, reset, and refocus. Calming areas can exist in all areas of the campus to promote opportunities for self-regulation.

- OST Notes
 - Specifically teach students how to use the materials in the calming area and the purpose of each item.
 - Establish expectations and norms for use of calming areas, including time limits of when to return to the learning environment.
 - Avoid using the calming area as a punishment.
 - Conflicts can be resolved in a guided manner using the calming area. Students should not be sent to a calming area as a “time-out.”
- OST Guidance and Examples

Respect Agreements:

Respect agreements are documents with collaborative group norms that are developed and agreed upon by an entire group. For in-school and out of school time, this means that educators develop group norms in partnership with their students (or for staff members, supervisors and staff member teams develop collaborative group norms for meetings, etc.). Rather than having a set of rules given to students, respect agreements provide an opportunity for educators and students to discuss and agree upon expectations for student-to-student interactions, student-educator interactions, and everyone's interactions with the learning space. By collecting input and developing consensus on group expectations, participants are likely to have greater understanding of their own group norms and develop a stronger sense of community. Respect agreements may also be called group norms, group learning agreements, treatment agreements or even a "Classroom Bill of Rights."

- [Video: Fostering Belonging with Classroom Norms](#)
- [Dallas ISD Respect Agreement Template](#)
- [Dallas ISD Respect Agreement "Think Sheet"](#) to facilitate individual reflection when norms have been violated.
- In an OST environment, the respect agreement may need to be taken down daily depending on the location of the programming. Consider presenting your respect agreement on a tri-fold presentation board that can easily be put away, then accessed and posted.

Mood Meter/Emotional Check-Ins:

A mood meter is a tool for guiding an emotional "check-in" for adults and children. The mood meter shows a range of feelings along levels of pleasantness and overall energy. Emotions change throughout the day based on our thoughts, and, ultimately, determine our actions. Therefore, it is important to learn to identify emotions and consider the potential impact that our emotions may have on others. Everyone's emotions are unique to their own circumstances and experiences, and there is no "ideal" area on the mood meter. In this way, participants should never be shamed or encouraged to change their emotion.

Rather, the intention of the mood meter is to build emotional literacy of students and adults by providing a tool that encourages individuals to:

- identify their emotion
- identify what caused the feeling
- practice a strategy that will help them get the most out of their day

Guidance from RULER (Brackett et al., 2013) suggests that the green and yellow quadrants are where we want to spend much of our time (mood) in school. A typical school day, however, will present a variety of emotions, and noticing them is critical to student engagement and learning. (Sample Mood Meter adapted from ruler.yale.edu)

- Mood Meter Implementation Tips
 - Once understood, use the mood meter in “morning meetings” and for daily journaling
 - Conduct daily check-ins using the mood meter related to course content, tests, end-of-day reflections, and longer reflections (daily/weekly tracking)
 - Use the mood meter for planning lessons by generating appropriate moods for different activities and content
 - Post the mood meter prominently in your class
 - Encourage student pairs to create emotion goals after tracking emotions
 - Teach students how to generate thought and action strategies to achieve their emotion goals. For example, a middle school student cannot simply leave the classroom when angry; therefore, the student needs to modify or reframe their thinking. At other times, changing thoughts may not be sufficient and acting may be necessary. For instance, an apology often is a better way to reduce guilt for hurting a classmate’s feelings than reframing the situation.
 - Create a strategy wall that references a variety of strategies for emotion regulation.
- Article: [The Role of Emotion Co-Regulation in Discipline](#)

Student Meeting History and Cultural Connection:

The morning meeting and community meeting practices used across our district have indigenous roots. The circle process that many non-Native people are using today is rooted in the tradition of “talking circles” that Indigenous Peoples in North America use and have used for millennia. Similarly, the “Talking Piece” is also an indigenous practice adopted by restorative practices. Dr. Loretta Standley, of the Cherokee Nation, states, “the art of Native communication style values cooperation over competition which reflects areas of their lifestyles. When engaging in conversation they listen intently generally looking down and do not focus on eye contact until the person speaking has finished.” As further explained in an article published by the publication Indian Country Today: “listening and understanding instills respect for those in attendance. As a result, at meetings or ceremonies, no one is left out of the process unless they have no comment. This methodology becomes a shared commitment.” Learn more about the history of [“The Circle”](#) and of the [Talking Piece](#).

Morning Meeting:

Responsive Classroom defines “morning meeting” as a deliberate way (with a specific process) to begin the school day, during which all classroom members – grown-ups and students – gather in a circle, greet one another, and listen and respond to each other’s news. Teachers may use this time to gather data, such as who is present and who is absent, who is smiling and who is having a hard time smiling. Many non-academic issues can be addressed in a supportive manner to ensure that children are able emotionally to meet the challenges of the day.

The term “morning meeting” is used in elementary settings to refer to the time of the day reserved for building relationships in the learning environment, whether it’s in or out of school. Conducting morning meetings is a practice that creates an environment where students feel safe and have a sense of importance and belonging.

Morning meetings enhance connections between students and the teacher, build social and emotional skills (such as respect, communication, and impulse control), and strengthen academic competence in a fun, interactive and learner-centered manner. Students develop empathy by learning about each other and laughing together, which helps to reduce attention-seeking behavior and relational aggression. See the suggested format for conducting a morning meeting from Responsive Classroom in the following sample document. (Sample [Morning Meeting Planning Document](#))

- Tips for enhancing morning meetings:
 - Establish supportive expectations and routines
 - Intentionally plan morning meetings with an SEL focus
 - Integrate with academic content (including upcoming content for that day)
 - Write the message prior to beginning of class
 - Align in-school themes and topics with OST

Community Meetings:

The term “community meeting” is used in secondary settings to refer to the time of the day reserved for building relationships in the classroom. Community meetings help create a trusting classroom environment. During community meetings, students have ample opportunities to practice all SEL competencies. Community meetings serve various functions, such as providing student-centered opportunities to develop listening and communication skills, strengthen student relationships with each other and the teacher, as well as provide facilitators with insight for addressing spoken needs. Students and educators are able to expand their empathy and develop perspective-taking skills.

- Resources for enhancing community meetings:
 - Establish supportive and agreed-up expectations through a [respect agreement](#) and review frequently. Remember the agreement should be a living document and may need to change as the needs of the class change.

- Schedule a consistent, regular time for community meetings and adhere to it.
- Create emotional safety by using [Brave Space/Safe Space protocols](#).
- Create a space that allows all participants to maintain eye contact, but still allows for flexibility.
- Additional restorative practice resources:
 - [The Institute for Restorative Practices](#)
 - [The National Educators for Restorative Practices](#)
 - [TEA Resources for Restorative Practices](#)
- Dallas ISD's SEL department has developed [weekly community meeting questions](#) for consideration.

SEL SIGNATURE PRACTICES

[CASEL](#) defines SEL Signature Practices as three components: welcoming activities, engaging practices, and optimistic closures. Together, these practices provide regular time and space for students (and adults) to build skills across all five SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building, and responsible decision-making.

Signature Practices can be applied to any group learning environment whether in-person or online: with students in an afterschool activity or an online reading activity, or with staff members in a staff meeting or during a grade level meeting. Moreover, Signature Practices are an excellent opportunity for rotating leadership: allowing students to choose and lead the welcoming activity, rotating staff members to facilitate the welcoming and optimistic closures for a meeting, etc. We have compiled examples of each practice and highlighted additional external resources for easy access.

WELCOMING ACTIVITIES

Welcoming activities provide dedicated time for students and staff members to get to know each other, find commonalities, and share about recent experiences to build community. Below are example discussion questions and other welcoming activity ideas to consider when planning a staff meeting, a lesson, or beginning an activity in the OST environment.

Note that welcoming activities can be facilitated virtually: students/participants can share responses to questions via chat box or sharing in a “circle” (and the speaker chooses the next person to share out in their virtual meeting space).

Example Discussion Questions

- If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?
- If you could invite three people (living, dead, or fictional) to a dinner party, who would you pick?
- If you could be a radio DJ for one hour today, what would you play?
- What are you thankful for today?
- What is your favorite comfort food?
- How do you like to celebrate your birthday?
- How do you manage stress?
- What is a tradition that you appreciate (with family, friends, co-workers, etc.)?
- What did you do this past weekend or what are you planning to do this weekend?
- What is your favorite fall/winter/spring/summer activity?
- What is your favorite activity or game? (For staff members: When you were a child, what was your favorite game or activity?)
- What is your favorite type of music? Do you have a favorite group/singer/performer?
- What have you read or watched lately that brought you joy? Share a book, TV show, or movie suggestion.
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- What’s the best piece of advice that you’ve been given?

- Who do you look up to as a leader (living, dead, fictional, etc.)?
- What's new? Think of something that is new with you that you'd like to share with the group.
- When did you last sing to yourself or someone else?
- If you could go anywhere on vacation, where would you go and what would you do?
- Share a song that reminds you of love (significant other, family, friends, etc.).
- Share a song that always makes you feel good.

The SEL Department has developed sentence stem examples and more welcoming questions for consideration.

Discussion questions can also be linked to upcoming learning/meeting content to guide participants into the right mindset or focus area.

Example Questions

- What is something that makes a student feel supported in their classroom?
- When was the last time that you reached a goal (personal/professional/academic) and how did it feel? What did it take to reach that goal?
- When was the last time that you learned something new? What was it, and what was the process like?
- What has been a memorable learning experience for you and why?
- Share two characteristics of a positive team member.
- What does it mean to work in a team?
- When was the last time that you were in a new place?
- How do you manage feelings of frustration?
- What does mastery of a skill look like?
- When do you know that you're good at something or that it's a strength?
- Today, I'm hoping to gain....

Example Welcoming Activities

- [SEL Dallas Start with Heart / welcoming activity videos](#)
- [Bingo: Find Somebody Who](#)
 - Consider using the layout of a bingo game card to share different interests, experiences, and characteristics. Encourage people to mingle with others, check off commonalities or findings, and score Bingo!
- Name Game
 - To learn everyone's name, encourage participants to choose an adjective that starts with the first letter of their name (e.g., Joyful Jane, Excellent Elridge, Laughing Lucy, etc.). Take turns in a circle to give everyone a chance to introduce their name and remember the previous names that have been introduced.
- Life Maps
 - Provide time, paper, and markers/colored pencils for participants to write or draw out their own life map. Ideally, this is a longer activity with time to identify key milestones in one's life and illustrate/write about them to then share out with the group.
- Dance Break: Provide one to two minutes for dancing to burn off some energy.
- Fist of Five: How are you feeling? How well do you know (specific topic)?
 - Participants show one to five fingers (5 usually being the best/most positive/most knowledgeable and 1 being not feeling well/need to learn more/ room to grow).
- CASEL has developed a [Welcoming Rituals handout](#) with more ideas.

ENGAGING PRACTICES

Engaging practices are a range of tools to promote collaboration, guide active learning in individual/partner/small group/whole group settings, and encourage regular brain breaks. Our brains are constantly searching for novelty. By applying a variety of engaging practices to classroom, afterschool, and meeting environments, we can lead enhanced learning opportunities with greater student/participant voice and involvement.

Examples of Engaging Practices

- Providing individual “think time” to reflect on recent content or an activity before sharing with a partner or a larger group. Consider journaling, listing, bubble maps, or drawing opportunities for students to share their thoughts in a manner that resonates closely with their own learning preferences.
- Encourage partner shares to provide students with time and space to discuss a topic with one partner or rotating through multiple partners. This improves communication, listening, empathy, and critical-thinking skills when individuals have time to share their thoughts as well as listen to others.
- Facilitate small/whole group opportunities to share with multiple partners or across the group.
 - The SEL department has developed an [Engaging Strategies for Use in the Classroom](#) handout with more classroom-focused options.
- Virtual engaging practices can include using the chat box to collect participant responses and questions, using breakout rooms (in [Zoom](#)) for partner/small group sharing time; using Google docs, spreadsheets, and forms to collect input or feedback from participants on a document; or using online polling or gaming programs to collect audience feedback or test their knowledge ([Slido](#), [Mentimeter](#), [Poll Everywhere](#), and [Kahoot](#) are some ideas).
- CASEL has developed an [Engaging Pedagogy handout](#) with more ideas for consideration.

Examples of Brain Breaks

- The SEL Department has developed an [SEL in Action YouTube Playlist](#) with brief brain break and mindfulness activity examples.
- SEL Dallas [Be Kind to Your Mind videos](#).
- David Sladkey has developed a great blog, [Energizing Brain Breaks](#), as well as a [book](#) with the same name. Both resources have many different brain break examples.
- Austin ISD has compiled a set of [brain break cards](#) for easy access to a range of ideas.

- Pure Edge provides strategies for educators to develop social, emotional, and academic skills through mindful movement and rest. Sign up for their free curriculum [here](#).
- Piedmont Healthcare has developed a list of [Mindfulness and Meditation Apps](#) to highlight key information about different apps, potential costs, and program details.

OPTIMISTIC CLOSURES

For both students and adults, reflection is a valuable component of any learning experience, including afterschool activities, learning new content, or collaborating with others on lesson plan development, among many others. Leading a brief closure activity helps with identifying meaningful takeaways, connecting with others about their experiences, and even metacognition (or “thinking about thinking”) to reflect on how you learned. Moreover, optimistic closures can build greater self-awareness, social awareness, and responsible decision-making skills.

Examples of Optimistic Closures

- What is your next step?
- What was the learning process like?
- What questions do you still have?
- What do you know now that you didn’t before?
- When did you productively struggle today and what was the outcome?
- What is something that are you curious/excited/interested in?
- What are you wondering about?
- What suggestions do you have to improve our next session/meeting/activity?
- What is one idea/strategy that you will try this week (based on our time together/activity, etc.)?
- How are you going to practice self-care this week/weekend?
- Based on your experience with this content/activity, what advice would you give to others?
- Based on our time together, what is something that you want to start, stop, and/or continue?

- Share an [Appreciation, Apology, or Aha!](#)
- Share an appreciation, aspiration, or action by completing one of the following sentences: I appreciate.../I aspire to.../I want to act on...
- Facilitate a quick [Peer Shout Out](#) time to recognize teammates.
 - Depending on the size of your group, you may increase the shout out time to 2-5 minutes.
- In one word or a short phrase, share something that reflects your inspiration from today (e.g., a strategy, change in mindset, further learning, etc.).
- Head/Heart/Hand reflection: Share one thing that you learned, one thing that you connected with, and one thing that you will do after this session.
- Take a few minutes to write a thank you note to someone.
- CASEL has developed an [Optimistic Closure](#) handout with more ideas.
- [SEL Dallas End with Friends / optimistic closure videos](#)

Note that CASEL has developed an [SEL 3 Signature Practices Playbook](#), which provides more information and examples for all Signature Practices.

SEL EXPLICIT SKILLS INSTRUCTION RESOURCES

The Dallas ISD Board of Trustees has enacted LOCAL policy ([EHAA LOCAL](#)), which states that district efforts for SEL implementation will center on CASEL’s five core SEL competencies. At this time, the Dallas ISD SEL department offers the following curriculum recommendations with “in-house” department knowledge and experience with implementing each curriculum:

- [Sanford Harmony](#) (Elementary School)
- [Leader in Me](#) (Elementary School)
- [Positive Action](#) (Middle School)
- [Random Acts of Kindness](#) (Middle School)
- [Community Matters: A Facing History and Ourselves Approach to Advisory](#) (High School)

There are many other SEL-explicit skills instruction programs available for consideration, and the [CASEL Program Guide](#) provides an overview of multiple CASEL-approved curriculum options that meet their criteria for providing quality SEL skill development in students. Within Dallas ISD, there are other SEL curriculums such as “Second Step” and “Leader in Me” that individual campus teams may choose to implement. The content below is based on the SEL Dallas team’s experience.

Elementary Curriculum Options

[Sanford Harmony](#) (Grades PreK-6): Denny Sanford is a philanthropist who aspires to have Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills taught in every classroom in the United States. His organization, Sanford Harmony, is now working to promote SEL worldwide, and offers curriculum for Pre-K-6th grade classrooms and professional learning opportunities through Sanford’s Inspirational Pathways. Additional training in philanthropy and opportunities for advanced degrees in education with an emphasis on Social and Emotional Learning are offered through National University. At this time, there is no cost associated with implementing Sanford Harmony or accessing their online curriculum and support.

- Register for a free account at [Sanford Harmony](#) (PreK-6th grades).
- Dallas ISD Sanford Harmony Pacing Guide (In-School): In order to support aligned explicit skills instruction among campus grade levels and between in- and out-of-school environments, the SEL department developed a pacing guide of Sanford Harmony lessons/units across the school year. This guide aligns with the district calendar, shows how SEL lessons align vertically from PreK-6th grades, and presents a message that can be read during morning announcements to introduce weekly campus-wide themes. (Dallas ISD Sanford Harmony Pacing Guide)

[Leader in Me](#) (Grades K-6th; Options for Grades K-12): Leader in Me is a CASEL-approved, evidence-based curriculum developed by Franklin Covey focused on a comprehensive school improvement model. Leader in Me aims to give educators a new paradigm for teaching students based on the following shifts:

- Everyone can be a leader

- Everyone has genius
- Change starts with me
- Educators empower students to lead their own learning
- Develop the whole person

Note that there are annual costs associated with the Leader in Me curriculum, staff training, and ongoing support. For additional information, including pricing, visit [Leader in Me](#).

Secondary Curriculum Options

Positive Action (Grades 6-8): Positive Action is a modular social and emotional learning program that embeds academic content in lessons designed to develop an intrinsic interest in learning and promote prosocial behavior. Note that there is a cost associated with purchasing Positive Action curriculum.

Random Acts of Kindness (Grades 6-8): The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation has created free, open-source resources for educators to use to teach SEL skills. These resources are CASEL-approved and suggested as a Tier I intervention designed to help schools create a culture of kindness. Within each unit, students are taught six core kindness concepts: respect, caring, inclusiveness, integrity, responsibility, and courage. Access resources here at [Random Acts of Kindness](#).

Community Matters: A Facing History and Ourselves Approach to Advisory (Grades 8-10): The Community Matters curriculum is designed around social and emotional foundational practices and supports student academic and social growth through lessons that will allow honest discussions, perspective-taking, and questioning. Key tenets of this curriculum allow students to build understanding and empathy; break down stereotypes; discover their voices; develop the skills necessary for academic and community success; build civic agency; and find new ways to participate in the school and local community. We recommend teaching these lessons during advisory period with facilitators who are trained in advisory facilitation. Facing History developed [Community Matters: A Facing History Approach to Advisory](#) and related activities/resources to equip educators with the necessary facilitation skills.

CONTENT INTEGRATION

Dallas ISD's approach to comprehensive SEL implementation includes integrating SEL into ongoing learning content and related activities to regularly reinforce SEL skills and concepts. Some examples include:

- A teacher may connect positive relationship-building and conflict to current literature assignments, and ask students to think about how they navigate conflict in their personal lives.
- An out-of-school-time leader may ask students to consider what it means to work in a team before starting a game of basketball and then guide reflection afterwards about how they worked as a team.
- Educators can connect SEL skills to academic concepts by engaging students in tasks such as reflecting about content through discussions or journaling, perspective-taking, or making real-life connections to concepts learned.
- During an elementary science lesson, students learn that scientists practice effective communication by making clear and concise notes, including drawings. Students then apply this knowledge by practicing the skill of elaboration when writing a narrative. The teacher can extend these effective communication skills by teaching and reinforcing mindful listening throughout the year.

When adults emphasize these regular connections to SEL, they guide students to building their knowledge and understanding of skills within every SEL competency. Moreover, as facilitators use interactive and collaborative pedagogies, they allow students to drive their learning by collaborating with each other, asking questions, and participating in their own sense-making of new concepts and ideas. Ultimately, these practices strengthen the teaching and learning of academic, enrichment, and social and emotional learning content.

Additional Resources

- [Content integration examples from SEL Dallas Campuses](#)
- [Out-of-School-Time examples](#)