

# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) AND SCHOOL HEALTH:

## Addressing SEL through the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Framework



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## Using this Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide school health staff and school health teams with beginning support for integrating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies into the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model through a series of simple handouts and suggested tools. Use the resources in this guide to begin to address SEL, strengthen school health programs and practices, and work for improved student well-being and academics.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Schools across the country are recognizing the value of addressing the whole child and considering the best ways to help all students succeed in school and in life. Social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies can be valuable in strengthening the work that schools are doing in the area of school health to improve health outcomes and develop a healthy school environment.<sup>2</sup>

This guide provides school health staff and teams with resources schools can use as a first step in integrating SEL into school health programs and practices. The guide includes:

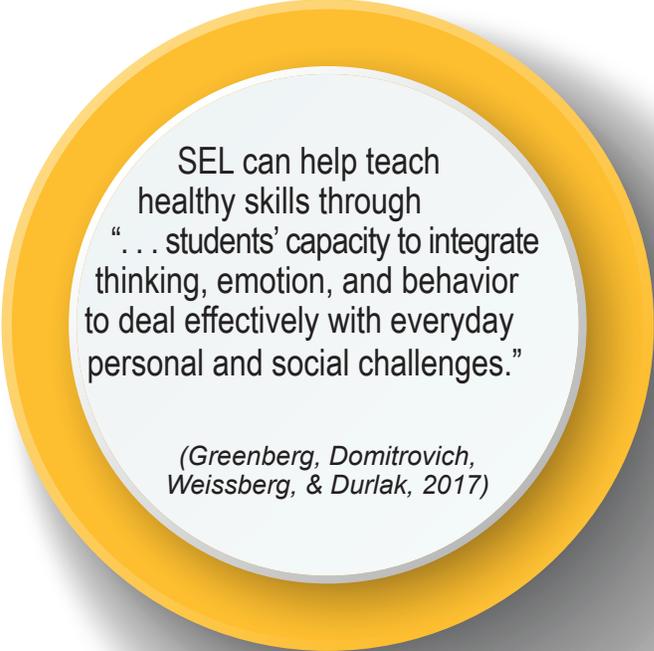
- A review of the basic goals, competencies, and skills of SEL
- A resource describing how schools can integrate SEL with the WSCC model<sup>3</sup> including links to resources that will help with planning and implementation
- Examples of school district success stories to inspire school leaders to enhance partnerships between school health and SEL
- Links to tools and resources for learning more about school health and SEL

## An Overview of Social and Emotional Learning

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as the “process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”<sup>2</sup> CASEL identifies five interrelated sets of SEL competencies:

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making

Healthy schools put policies in place that support students, staff, and families to be healthy and live healthy lifestyles. These schools create a culture of health and emphasize the role of the entire school community.<sup>4</sup> SEL can be an important part of what makes a healthy school. SEL can work throughout all 10 components of the WSCC model and be a critical part of healthy programs and policies in a school.



SEL can help teach healthy skills through “... students’ capacity to integrate thinking, emotion, and behavior to deal effectively with everyday personal and social challenges.”

*(Greenberg, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Durlak, 2017)*

## A Closer Look at Social and Emotional Competencies

As mentioned above, CASEL identifies five interrelated SEL competencies that schools should address with students, families, and staff. Below are descriptions of each competency and a few examples of SEL skills that link to the competency.



### SELF-AWARENESS

Our ability to accurately recognize our own emotions, thoughts, and values and how each influences our behavior. This includes recognizing stress or negative emotions, being aware of our strengths, and possessing self-confidence and optimism.

#### Examples of SEL skills:

- Identify emotions
- Recognize personal strengths and limitations



### SELF-MANAGEMENT

Our ability to successfully regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations every day. This includes effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, goal-setting, and demonstrating self-motivation.

#### Examples of SEL skills:

- Set concrete goals and self-motivate
- Regulate emotions and behavior in new and challenging situations

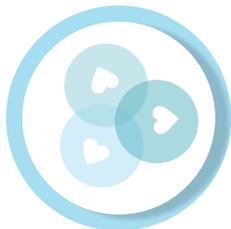


### RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

Our ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. This includes taking into consideration the well-being of ourselves and others.

#### Examples of SEL skills:

- Make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions
- Evaluate the consequences of decisions and actions



### SOCIAL AWARENESS

Our ability to empathize and see things from different perspectives. This includes understanding social and ethical norms for behavior and recognizing where family, school, and community resources and supports are found.

#### Examples of SEL skills

- Practice empathy for self and others
- Take into consideration the perspectives and backgrounds of others



### RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

Our ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships among a variety of individuals and groups. This includes cooperating with others, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict, and seeking and offering help when needed.

#### Examples of SEL skills

- Communicate clearly and listen to others
- Negotiate conflict in teamwork situations

Sources: (CASEL, 2017); (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017)

# SEL and the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Model



CDC and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Design (ASCD) developed the WSCC model to strengthen a unified and collaborative approach to improve learning and health in schools. Use the suggestions below to explore integrating SEL competencies into components of the WSCC model.<sup>3</sup>

<b>Social and Emotional Climate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a <a href="#">school wellness policy</a> that includes SEL and health priorities</li> <li>Establish trauma-informed policies that include SEL and create a climate that is sensitive to <a href="#">adverse child experiences (ACEs) and trauma</a> for all students</li> </ul>
<b>Physical Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that students and staff feel safe and engaged in the school's <a href="#">outdoor physical space</a> and <a href="#">indoor classroom space</a></li> <li><a href="#">Teach SEL</a> to prevent bullying and violence and to encourage safe school spaces</li> </ul>
<b>Counseling, Psychological and Social Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include counseling and mental health services staff on the <a href="#">school health team</a></li> <li>Connect <a href="#">mental health services</a> with school-wide SEL programming for students</li> </ul>
<b>Employee Wellness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that staff and administrators receive <a href="#">professional development</a> on SEL</li> <li>Encourage staff to model SEL skills for personal social-emotional health, from <i>social awareness</i> to <i>relationship skills</i>, to improve <a href="#">school employee wellness</a></li> </ul>
<b>Nutrition Environment and Service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage students to develop <i>social awareness</i> and <i>relationship skills</i>, such as social engagement and relationship-building, during <a href="#">meal and snack times</a></li> <li>Promote <a href="#">healthy eating</a> <i>decision-making</i> skills</li> </ul>
<b>Physical Education and Physical Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide <a href="#">opportunities within a physical education class and during physical activity</a> to increase <i>self-management</i> skills, such as self-motivation and goal-setting</li> <li>Offer all teachers <a href="#">professional development</a> on how to integrate movement into the school day to enhance students' <i>self-management</i> and <i>self-awareness</i> skills</li> </ul>
<b>Health Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure mental and emotional health are addressed in the health education curriculum by using the CDC's <a href="#">Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT)</a></li> <li>Design curriculum that integrates the skills of the National Health Education Standards and SEL competencies</li> </ul>
<b>Community Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide opportunities for <a href="#">out-of-school time (OST) programs</a> to build <i>relationship skills</i></li> <li>Encourage <a href="#">community partnerships</a> and service-learning to practice SEL</li> </ul>
<b>Family Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage <a href="#">family partnerships</a> on the school health team to build relationships</li> <li><a href="#">Communicate regularly with parents</a> about SEL to help build skills at home</li> </ul>
<b>Health Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that <a href="#">school health services</a> support social and emotional health of students across health care needs, such as <i>responsible decision-making</i> and <i>self-awareness</i> for the management of chronic conditions (asthma, food allergies, or diabetes)</li> </ul>

## District Spotlights: SEL and School Health

### Invest in SEL through the school health team or district-level council

The “think, feel, act” motto underscores Washington Local School District’s (Toledo, Ohio) investment in SEL. The WSCC teams invited staff, students, families, and community members to be involved in social and emotional health initiatives at the school and to bring their voice to the team discussions. Teams recognize how support of the school community is important at any phase to create or strengthen opportunities to **think, feel, and act**.

#### Tips for schools:

- Find a staff person who can be a wellness champion for your school and who will serve on your WSCC team or district-level council to promote SEL with school health initiatives
- Combine SEL efforts with current school health education learning and remember to practice SEL in and out of the classroom — SEL should be practiced by everyone, every day!

### Celebrate adult SEL to elevate positive relationships

The North Clackamas School District in Milwaukie, Oregon, first introduced SEL programs throughout its Title I Elementary Schools. The school district placed an emphasis on adult SEL for staff so the SEL would help to build a healthy climate for everyone in the school — in and out of classrooms. School health team members encouraged administration and colleagues to learn about SEL and school health, demonstrated simple ways to role model SEL, and engaged family/community support to sustain the work in their schools.

#### Tips for schools:

- Adults are the game changers in schools! When staff and school leaders practice adult SEL, they improve their own mental health and cultivate rewarding, trusting relationships with students and colleagues
- Promote a culture of professional development that focuses on SEL and hold regular meetings for district and school teams to learn about current health topics in your community

### Use an equity lens to create opportunity for SEL and school partnership

The Atlanta Public Schools (APS) in Atlanta, Georgia, committed to district-level equitable solutions to achieve a healthier school climate. APS provided SEL programs taught by trained staff in all classrooms with a focus on emotional skill-building. Schools valued the importance of teacher training in SEL and how it reinforced student involvement and family partnerships as part of the health education curriculum. Creating equitable solutions in APS increased opportunities for youth to thrive and for staff to nourish the whole child *and* provide services that students need.<sup>6</sup>

#### Tips for schools:

- Motivate students (or “Student Health Ambassadors”) to be involved in school health teams and existing school health/wellness activities in order to promote the youth voice in decisions
- Encourage school-wide collaboration in designing and implementing SEL initiatives for students

## Tools and Resources

The table below provides a brief list of sample tools and resources that school health staff and school leadership can use to improve healthy schools through SEL.

Tool/Resource	Description
<b>School Health Tools</b>	
<a href="#">School Health Index</a>	Online self-assessment and planning tool that helps schools assess school health programs and policies, develop plans, and engage stakeholders.
<a href="#">WSCC Team Training Modules</a>	Ten modules designed for school or district staff to use in working together to develop, maintain, or sustain school health teams.
<a href="#">School Health Guidelines</a>	Guidelines that serve as the foundation to develop, implement, and evaluate school-based policies and practices for students.
<a href="#">Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT)</a>	Assessment tool that helps schools and districts analyze health education curricula based on CDC's Characteristics of an Effective Health Education Curriculum. HECAT can help schools select, develop, or enhance effective health education.
<a href="#">The WSCC Model: A Guide to Implementation</a>	Implementation guide designed for school and district staff, community partners, public health professionals, parents, and others. This guide provides step-by-step guidance for districts and schools to implement WSCC.
<a href="#">School Health Profiles</a>	System of surveys assessing school health policies and practices in states, large urban school districts, and territories.
<a href="#">Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)</a>	The YRBSS monitors six categories of health-related behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death and disability among youth and adults. Schools can use the data results to improve school health policies and programs.
<b>Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Tools</b>	
<a href="#">The CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL</a>	Online platform offering guidance and evidence-based tools to help school health teams implement high-quality SEL and improve existing practices.
<a href="#">SEL Assessment Guide</a>	Resources for leaders and school teams involved in assessing student health outcomes and SEL measures.
<a href="#">The CASEL Program Guides</a>	Guides that support selection of evidence-based SEL programs and recommendations on guidelines to improve SEL research and practice.

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