

## CASEL's Framework for Systemic Social and Emotional Learning

### Overview

CASEL's Framework for Systemic Social and Emotional Learning is an integrated framework that highlights five SEL competencies promoted through multiple contexts. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. To frame thinking, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has identified five core social and emotional competence clusters to use in interventions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Below, we identify and define the competencies as they are presented in the framework.

**Self-awareness:** The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations and possess a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

- This includes: recognizing one's emotions and thoughts; assessing one's strengths and limitations; confidence; self-efficacy/growth mindset

**Self-management:** The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.

- This includes: self-regulation; stress management; impulse control; setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals; motivation; organizational skills

### CASEL Framework for Systemic SEL

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

The CASEL framework is widely used by researchers, educators, and policymakers to help establish systemic, equitable, evidence-based social and emotional learning for all preschool to high school students. It guides the design, implementation, and continuous improvement of school-family-community partnerships to enhance the social, emotional, and academic competencies of young people.

– Roger Weissberg

The briefs in this 10-part series each describe an individual framework currently in use. They are intended to illustrate how frameworks can be analyzed and help practitioners learn to evaluate frameworks on the types of criteria that matter most in their settings. The briefs are not an endorsement of these frameworks.

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**Social-awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

- This includes: taking the perspective of others from diverse backgrounds and cultures; empathy; understanding social and ethical norms for behavior; recognizing family, school, community resources, and supports

**Relationship skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.

- This includes: clear communication; active listening; cooperation/teamwork; resisting inappropriate social pressure; negotiating conflict; seeking and offering help; establishing and maintaining relationships

**Responsible decision-making:** The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

- This includes: identifying problems; analyzing situations; solving problems; evaluation, reflection, awareness of ethical responsibility

## History of the Framework

“Social and emotional learning” emerged from a meeting in 1994 hosted by the Fetzer Institute. Meeting attendees included researchers, educators, and child advocates involved in various education-based efforts to promote positive development in children. These SEL pioneers came together to address a concern about ineffective school programming and a lack of coordination among programs at the school level. SEL was introduced as a framework that addresses the needs of young people and helps to align and coordinate school programs and programming. Under CASEL’s leadership, the model has evolved over the years to become more systematic, emphasizing schoolwide models and encouraging working with families, schools, and communities. The Framework for Systemic SEL has evolved and responded to the needs of the field, forming collaborative partnerships at school and district levels through the [Collaborating Districts Initiative](#) and at the state level through the [Collaborating States Initiative](#). CASEL also supports policy leaders to inform federal policy.

For a full history, see <https://casel.org/history/> or the Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning: Research and Practice (pp 3-19).

## COMPETENCIES NAMED IN THIS FRAMEWORK

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

## Purpose and Intended Audience

The Framework for Systemic SEL is intended to guide educators, families, and communities to promote students’ social, emotional, and academic learning. The framework was derived from practice and aimed toward practice. CASEL is partnering with more than 20 school districts nationwide to support their efforts to systematically implement high-quality SEL districtwide and share those learnings broadly. Additionally, CASEL works with educators, researchers, practitioners, out-of-school time leaders, and policymakers to foster SEL as an integral part of every student’s education.

## Settings

The Framework for Systemic SEL has widespread applications. CASEL’s competencies are used world-wide in preschool through high school settings, both in school and out-of-school. Based on learnings and field-testing in districts across the country, CASEL has identified four focus areas of systemic implementation (see District and School Theories of Action below). CASEL recommends coordinating strategies across classrooms, schools, homes, and communities and provides free, targeted resources for each setting.

### How?

District and School Theories of Action
Build Foundational Support and Plan
Strengthen adult SEL competencies and capacity
Promote SEL for Students
Practice Continuous Improvement

### What and where?



### Why?

Student Outcomes	
Short-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Improved attitudes about self, others, and tasks</li> <li>•Perceived classroom and school climate</li> </ul>
Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Positive social behaviors and relationships</li> <li>•Academic success</li> <li>•Fewer conduct problems</li> <li>•Less emotional distress</li> <li>•Less drug use</li> </ul>
Long-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•High school graduation; college/career readiness</li> <li>•Safe sexual behaviors, healthy relationships</li> <li>•Improved mental health</li> <li>•Reduced criminal behavior</li> <li>•Engaged citizenship</li> </ul>

## Criteria Ratings: Conceptual Clarity

FIVE CONCEPTUAL CLARITY CRITERIA			
CRITERIA	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Specificity	Definitions of each of the five core competencies are provided, along with examples of skills related to each. Observable behaviors are not provided.		
Balance	CASEL's five competencies promote interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cognitive competence. The CASEL 5 emphasize intrapersonal skills and attitudes (self-awareness and self-management), interpersonal skills and attitudes (social awareness, empathy, and other relationship skills), and making ethical and principled choices in personal and social situations. The framework is comprehensive, as it includes the three dimensions as well as skills, attitudes, and knowledge.		
Developmental	Although the framework acknowledges the importance of developmental appropriateness, no learning progression or explicit developmental indicators are provided in the model with specific age or grade-related benchmarks. However, programs based on the CASEL systemic framework tend to be age/grade-level specific, and CASEL has worked with states to create SEL state standards with developmental benchmarks.		
Culturally Sensitive	The framework acknowledges the importance of considering the ethnic and cultural background of students, but indicates that more research is needed to determine if and how modifications can be made to SEL programs to ensure they are more effective for different populations/in cross-cultural settings. CASEL provides links to external resources on diversity and inclusion and created the Equity Work Group in 2016 to demonstrate that SEL and equity are mutually dependent.		
Empirically Grounded	Research provides evidence linking social and emotional competencies named in the Framework to outcomes such as academic achievement and life outcomes. Up to 18 years later, students exposed to SEL in school continue to do better than their peers on a number of indicators: positive social behaviors and attitudes, skills such as empathy and teamwork, and academics. Additionally they have fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress, and lower drug use, among many other benefits.		
<p><i>These ratings are intended to help illustrate the strengths and limits of some popular frameworks. They are neither designed to formally compare frameworks nor endorse any framework. The ratings are based on criteria defined more fully in <a href="#">this brief</a> and the process of rating and appropriate uses are discussed in the <a href="#">introductory brief</a> to this series. We urge practitioners to review these and prioritize which criteria are most important for use in their particular context.</i></p>			

Criteria Ratings: Implementation Support

FIVE IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT CRITERIA			
CRITERIA	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Intended for Practice	The framework is derived from practice and aimed toward practice. Application of SEL efforts should be at the district and school levels, using research-based programs. These should include grade-by-grade sequence, from preschool through high school. CASEL considers four contexts in which these behaviors are practiced: classroom outside of SEL training, schoolwide, family, and community.		
Resources for Practitioners	CASEL provides many online tools and resources, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An SEL resource library that links to books, articles, reports, studies, videos, and more</li> <li>• A suite of free, online tools and resources that provides targeted guidance, tools, and best practices for districts, schools, classrooms, and families</li> <li>• Two program guides that provide information about effective PreK/elementary and middle/high school SEL programs</li> <li>• The SEL District Resource Center and CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL share research-based guidance, resources, and learnings from CASEL's work with collaborating districts on how to support high-quality, systemic SEL implementation and embed SEL into every aspect of a district's work and students' educational experiences.</li> </ul>		
Resources for Use with Children and Youth	Although CASEL has not produced these, partners and other organizations have created resources based on the systemic SEL framework.		
Resources for Measurement and Data Use	While CASEL has not developed a particular measure, they have worked with Washoe County (Davidson et al., 2017) and others to develop measures. Further, many measures use or are based on the systemic framework (e.g., DESSA, SSIS, SELweb). In addition, several resources such as the District Resource Center and other collaborative efforts provide guidance around assessments, measurement, and data use.		
Empirically Tested	An ongoing evaluation of districtwide SEL implementation suggests that participating districts have sustained, deepened, and broadened their commitment to SEL and developed capacities to support its implementation. The research demonstrates positive trends in the academic and behavioral growth of students in schools within districts with systematic SEL approaches, though these improvements are not yet seen consistently for all students.		
<p><i>These ratings are intended to help illustrate the strengths and limits of some popular frameworks. They are neither designed to formally compare frameworks nor endorse any framework. The ratings are based on criteria defined more fully in <a href="#">this brief</a> and the process of rating and appropriate uses are discussed in the <a href="#">introductory brief</a> to this series. We urge practitioners to review these and prioritize which criteria are most important for use in their particular context.</i></p>			

## Summary of the Framework

CASEL's Framework for Systemic Social and Emotional Learning is an integrated framework for how educators, families, and communities partner to support SEL. It was developed by CASEL, a nonprofit that aims to make evidence-based SEL an integral part of PreK-12 education. The framework focuses on how to promote intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competence in systemic ways across many settings.

## About the Developer



The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defined SEL more than two decades ago. CASEL is the world's leading organization advancing one of the most important fields in education in decades: the practice of promoting integrated academic, social, and emotional learning for all children in preschool through high school. As a trusted source for knowledge about

high-quality, evidence-based SEL, CASEL supports educators and policy leaders and enhances the experiences and outcomes for all PreK-12 students.

## About the Author



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Teresa Borowski is a graduate student in the Community and Prevention Research PhD program in Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), where her research focuses on social-emotional competence development, particularly through dance and other arts. She works as a research specialist with CASEL's research team and the Frameworks subgroup of the Assessment Work Group. She is also the co-editor of Measuring SEL's blog. Prior to UIC, Teresa worked as a research assistant in the Infant Cognition Lab and the Cultural Studio at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and for the Learning and Memory Lab at the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology.

## References

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Kendziora, K., & Yoder, N. (2016). When districts support and integrate social and emotional learning (SEL): Findings from an ongoing evaluation of districtwide implementation of SEL. American Institutes of Research. Retrieved from: <https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/When-Districts-Support-SEL-Brief.pdf>

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### Useful Links to Explore:

- CASEL website: <https://casel.org/>
- CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL: <https://schoolguide.casel.org/>
- CASEL Program Guides: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs: <https://casel.org/guide/>
- SEL District Resource Center: <https://drc.casel.org/>

## The Measuring SEL Series of Frameworks Briefs

The Establishing Practical Social-Emotional Competence Assessments of Preschool to High School Students project as guided by the Assessment Work Group (AWG) is dedicated to helping advance the effective use of data to inspire practice in SEL. In deciding how the AWG could best contribute to advancing the field and complement rather than compete with other efforts underway to address the challenges of multiple frameworks and inconsistent use of language, the AWG Frameworks Subgroup, led by Stephanie Jones and Roger Weissberg, developed four series of briefs designed for practitioners. Each series and each brief in the series is designed to help advance how people think about the issues and make reasonable choices that work best for them and their context. We hope they provide a set of “building blocks” that systems and practitioners can use to advance and improve their SEL efforts. Learn more at <https://measuringSEL.casel.org>

### Introductory Series

These briefs are about what frameworks are, how they are useful, the challenges and opportunities they present in practice, and defining criteria that are helpful when considering what frameworks to use.

### Comparative Series

These briefs explore efforts underway to categorize and align ways of thinking about comparing unique frameworks. The briefs also describe tools available to aid systems and practitioners in their selection and use of a framework.

### Special Issues Series

These briefs identify critical issues that frameworks must address or that influence how they are used that are important to consider when selecting and using frameworks, such as equity and SEL, and developmental considerations.

### Descriptive Series

These briefs each describe an individual framework currently in use. They are intended to illustrate how frameworks can be analyzed and help practitioners learn to evaluate frameworks on the types of criteria that matter most in their settings. *(The briefs are not an endorsement of these frameworks.)*

*The Assessment Work Group is committed to advancing dialogue on key issues in the field and stating a perspective when appropriate. The views and opinions expressed in these briefs reflect the general position of the Assessment Work Group. They do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of CASEL or any of the individual organizations involved with the work group.*