

***Preliminary Description of the  
Proposed Social Emotional  
Learning  
Standards Framework for Oregon***

Developed by the HB 2166  
Phase 1 Social Emotional  
Learning Advisory Group

*September 2022*



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## Foreword from the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Advisory Group

Social emotional learning (SEL) is at the center of how humans learn in any setting, including formal education. Social emotional learning, or SEL, at its most fundamental level it is simply about recognizing that **learning is inherently a social and emotional process**. A leading SEL organization, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), uses this definition:

*SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. (CASEL, 2021a, para. 1)*

SEL is already a key component of teaching and learning in many places across Oregon, from kindergarten classrooms to high school. SEL is intertwined with academic learning in some of the following ways:

- to interpret narrative texts requires the ability to empathize with a protagonist's emotions;
- to collaborate with fellow students on a research project requires social skills to succeed;
- to apply scientific discoveries requires assessing ethical as well as technical implications;
- health education encompasses mental as well as physical health; and
- to succeed in career and technical fields requires employability skills related to SEL.

When added to the current assemblage of educational standards, SEL need not be an additional burden on educators but instead can help integrate and bring coherence to these types of foundational concepts needed for learning across disciplines.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus the need for a more intentional and statewide approach to elevating the importance of SEL as a foundation for learning and as integral to healthy school communities. The pandemic exposed how vital community and connectedness are for the wellbeing of all humans, including our students and educators. It has brought to the forefront that when SEL is neglected, student and educator learning and wellbeing is negatively impacted.

Yet from the challenges we collectively face as a society, we also find opportunity for change. This report and the recommendations within are a call to serve crucial student needs by laying a framework for Social Emotional Learning as a foundation for education in our state.

By implementing a Social Emotional Learning framework we can best support the students, caregivers and educators that make up the school community. Many students and communities

have demonstrated resilience and strength through the adversity of this moment in our shared history, and many have also faced new or renewed struggles, from grief and loss to physical and mental health concerns. Existing disparities have only been worsened by the pandemic, specifically disparities for Black/African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Latino/a/e/x, and Pacific Islander communities, students with disabilities, and students and families navigating poverty. Students have suffered, as have educators and families. The pandemic exposed inequities amongst student groups, surfaced the shortfalls of mental health resources in schools, and has led to burnout and exhaustion among the education workforce. How we respond to addressing these adversities and inequities is critical to overcoming outdated systems and advancing the conditions proven to promote learning and growth. **Implementing an overarching SEL framework and standards across Oregon schools will cultivate community, healing, and growth in the wake of a global crisis.** Done well, the standards and framework weave together the ways that SEL practices fit with the development and maintenance of health, safety, and support in all Oregon schools.

When staff have a deep knowledge of social emotional skills, they are able to create environments where everyone belongs. Incorporating SEL throughout the day leads to increased academic achievement and improves mental health, as well as decreases stress and reported conduct problems (Durlak et al., 2011).

The recommendations put forth in this report, including the proposed Framework and Standards, provide the foundation to implement an SEL vision for Oregon that has the potential to advance learning for students and educators.

## Executive Summary

In 2021, the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 2166 requiring the development of social emotional standards and a framework for K-12 students. The bill required the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), in consultation with the Early Learning Division and the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC), to convene an Advisory Group (SEL Advisory Group(1)) to develop an *initial report* describing the proposed standards and framework. This report fulfills this first charge and is intended to be used by the State Board of Education when considering the standards and framework for adoption next year.

ODE has worked to develop and implement an education equity stance, to advance racial equity work, and to develop and implement the [Integrated Model for Mental Health](#). SEL standards and an SEL framework are nested with and inextricable from equity and mental health--themes and connections that run through the report and the recommendations.

To develop this report, ODE convened the Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group composed of students, educators, community-based organizations, state agencies, school districts, and education service districts. The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group met monthly starting in October 2021 and the nationwide scan to review SEL Standards and Frameworks that aligned with the Integrated Model of Mental Health. ODE also conducted an in-depth review of Oregon data to drive the recommendations.

This report to the State Board of Education (SBE) starts with SEL research and background, then provides context related to SEL initiatives and leadership across the country and within Oregon schools. Extending from this landscape scan, the report describes how Oregon can build from existing system strengths while developing student SEL standards and an SEL framework.

The primary purpose of this report is to provide a preliminary description of what the Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group would like to see in the framework and standards. These descriptions take the form of recommendations for the subsequent Phase 2 SEL Advisory Group and its charge. First, there are recommended guiding principles; these are intended to inform the implementation of student and system standards. The student standards recommendations follow, including that they are developed by braiding the CASEL competencies and the transformative SEL Focal Constructs. In addition, there are six statements regarding the style and substance of the student standards that are implementation considerations. Finally, there is a description of the system standards that complement the student standards as well as three implementation considerations, conveying the system changes that will substantially contribute to the success of statewide SEL implementation.

To support the next phase of HB 2166 implementation, ODE will establish the Phase 2 SEL Advisory Group, charged with developing the SEL framework and standards for adoption by the State Board of Education (SBE) by September 15, 2023. This next SEL Advisory Group (Phase 2) will be guided by the bill text as well as the contents of this report. To inform this work, ODE will also continue to evaluate relevant educational policies, align to other SEL state initiatives and to conduct engagement related to SEL.

## Background: HB 2166 and Advisory Groups

### Authorizing Law

[House Bill \(HB\) 2166](#) was passed by the Oregon Legislature in 2021, with support from the Governor’s Racial Justice Council, community-based organizations, and the Oregon Department of Education. HB 2166 focuses both on preventing suspension and expulsion of young children prior to the age of 5 from early childhood care and education programs, as well as the development of SEL standards for public school students in kindergarten through grade 12. This report pertains to Section 4, the portion of the bill related to SEL.

ODE worked closely with the Oregon legislature to ensure that the bill language was aligned to [ODE’s education equity stance](#), ODE’s racial equity work and ODE’s [Integrated Model for Mental Health](#). This intention was incorporated into the bill in the form of “Whereas” statements, which are listed below. The following “Whereas” statements, drawn directly from the bill text, have served as a lens informing the development of this report.

- 1. Whereas social emotional learning is a central component of an integrated model of mental and emotional health that also includes racial equity, trauma-informed principles and practices and strengths-based multi-tiered systems of support; and*
- 2. Whereas social emotional learning skills, in conjunction with racial equity, trauma-informed principles and practices and strengths-based multi-tiered systems of support, can contribute significantly to mental and emotional health and overall health promotion and can be an integral part of school culture, climate, safety and mental and physical health promotion efforts; and*
- 3. Whereas social emotional learning skills, in conjunction with racial equity, trauma-informed principles and practices and strengths-based multi-tiered systems of support, can enable school communities to create just, equitable and inclusive cultures in which all students, staff and leaders belong and feel respected, valued and affirmed in their individual and intersectional interests, talents, social identities, cultural values and backgrounds; and*
- 4. Whereas social emotional learning skills, in conjunction with racial equity, trauma-informed principles and practices and strengths-based multi-tiered systems of support, can help schools cultivate understanding, examine biases, reflect on and address the impact of racism, build cross-cultural relationships and foster adult and student practices that close opportunity gaps and create more inclusive school communities that deliver high quality educational opportunities and outcomes for all students; and*



5. *Whereas social emotional learning should be incorporated into all academic content standards as part of an integrated model of mental and emotional health, with the explicit goal being to promote antiracism and educational equity and to create conditions for all students to thrive.*

The bill directs the Oregon Department of Education, in consultation with the Early Learning Division and the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, to convene an advisory group to propose to the State Board of Education: a) SEL standards, and b) an SEL framework, both regarding K-12 students. The bill establishes that the State Board of Education shall adopt these no later than September 15, 2023 and shall require school districts to implement the standards and framework no later than July 1, 2024.

The bill establishes the following requirements for the statewide SEL standards and framework:

- (a) Be developmentally appropriate;*
- (b) Align with other models and practices of the department related to mental health;*
- (c) Include racial equity and trauma-informed principles and practices within strengths-based multi-tiered systems of support;*
- (d) Increase public school students' social emotional development;*
- (e) Promote self-awareness, awareness of others, critical thinking and understanding regarding the interaction between systemic social structures and histories, contributions and perspectives of individuals who:*
  - (A) Are Alaska Native, Native American, Black, African American, Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Latinx or Middle Eastern;*
  - (B) Are women;*
  - (C) Have disabilities;*
  - (D) Are immigrants or refugees;*
  - (E) Are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit, intersex, asexual, nonbinary or another minority gender identity or sexual orientation; or*
  - (F) Have experienced disproportionate results in education due to historical practices;*
- and*
- (f) Promote the creation of school cultures that support kindness, care, connection, equity, diversity and inclusion.*

Prior to the adoption of the SEL standards and the SEL framework, the bill required an advisory group (SEL Advisory Group (1)) to develop and present this report to the State Board of Education (SBE), describing the proposed SEL standards and framework. This report must be submitted no later than September 15, 2022, and responds to the legislature requirement for

an *initial* set of inputs. This report will be followed by the convening of a new advisory group (Phase 2 SEL Advisory Group) to build on, develop and formalize the final SEL Framework and Standards for consideration and adoption by the SBE in 2023.

## **Advisory Groups**

The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group is composed of students, educators, community-based organizations, state agencies, school districts, and education service districts. Invitations to apply to the Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group were sent through outreach to culturally specific community-based organizations, education service districts, state professional associations, and student organizations. Applications were then reviewed by a committee of staff from ODE, ELD, and TSPC. The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group met monthly and convened three work groups that met multiple times. These work groups included a division of labor related to the SEL framework recommendations, the standards recommendations, and the plan to engage community members on process. In total, the time commitment of volunteer advisory group members was 30 hours in required meetings, 3 hours a month in optional meetings, and approximately one hour a month in assigned homework. The full membership list of the Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group can be referenced in Appendix A.

Due to the nature of standards development work, the Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group that developed this report will not be the same advisory group that develops the standards and framework that are presented to the State Board of Education for adoption. Members of the Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group will be invited to apply to the Phase 2 SEL Advisory Group, though there will be a greater focus on practitioner representation in the SEL Advisory Group (2).

## **Community Voices in the Advisory Group’s Research Process**

Considering community and student voices was an important part of developing the recommendations for this report. The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group had extensive discussions about how best to thoughtfully and meaningfully engage historically underserved student communities across the state. In these conversations, two primary tensions surfaced:

- **Lack of time and resources to meaningfully engage community members:** The SEL Advisory Group (1) initially wanted to develop a community engagement plan and a small committee developed draft survey questions. However, without dedicated

resources to compensate respondents, the Group determined they would not be able to honor the expressed value around compensating community members, particularly for focus groups, for their time and expertise.

- **Awareness that inadequate methods of engaging communities may perpetuate inequities:** The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group held a belief that if they proceeded with engagement, unintentional harm may occur by perpetuating a lack of opportunity for those who are traditionally left out. Reaching out to only some communities and some community members, as was likely to occur given the limited time and resources available, would mean that certain voices were amplified while others went unheard.

To acknowledge these tensions while honoring the need for the advisory group's recommendations to be informed by community voice, the group chose to review and include prior research and community engagement from diverse communities in Oregon. The following sources are referenced here as a way of honoring that many agencies and organizations have been making the same requests of schools and communities. Instead of starting over with a brand new process and adding one more request, the Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group chose to review existing research and reflect on the connections to our work in this report:

- Oregon Department of Education's "LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan" (2020c)
- Oregon Health Authority's Healthy Teens Survey (2019)
- Oregon Student Health Survey (2020)
- Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs' "Crisis de Nuestro Bienestar: A Report on Latino Mental Health in Oregon" (Kim-Gervey et al., 2020)
- Coalition of Communities of Color's "Investing in Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Behavioral Health Care in Oregon" report (2021)
- Oregon Student Voice's "State of Our Schools Report" (2017)

## Social Emotional Learning Research and Background

### Defining Social Emotional Learning

While there are many definitions of SEL, the one most cited in the research is from CASEL (2021a, para. 1):

*[SEL is] an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.*

The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group used this definition by CASEL for its shared understanding of SEL as a process as well as collection of practices.

In order to address equity through SEL, it is important to name both what SEL is and what it is not, and to address misconceptions (see Figure 2). SEL is broadly understood as a process through which students and adults build awareness and skills in managing emotions, setting goals, establishing relationships, and making responsible decisions that support success in school and in life. SEL is not a way to assess or identify student deficits, and it is not just a curriculum or an additional program that is added on top of everything else. Rather, SEL provides an intentional approach to building on student assets, creating a sense of belonging, and developing agency and identity. SEL supports education equity in multiple ways: promoting whole-child development, elevating the social and interconnected nature of learning, advancing the belief that all children can learn, developing young people’s skills to navigate across social contexts, and providing ways to improve relationships between students and adults.

#### When implemented with an equity-driven approach, social emotional learning (SEL)...

- **Recognizes individuals’ ways of being and knowing.** Approaches to learning recognize power, privilege, positionality and honors history and people’s lived experiences.
- **Is intentionally integrated** throughout all content areas and contexts.
- **Is not an effort to shame or blame anyone** because of any aspect of their identity. It is possible to recognize historical and current institutions while also recognizing that individuals do not create these institutions on their own.
- **Asks adults to do their own social emotional learning**, both to create a school climate for students to thrive and to model development for students
- **Centers on student needs** without being driven by mindsets that try to “fix” a child.
- **Calls for wider changes to systems and school cultures** beyond changing individual

## When implemented with an equity-driven approach, social emotional learning (SEL)...

students.

- **Is not a checklist or stand-alone lesson.**
- **Is not a replacement for mental health services or supports.**
- **Requires educators, school staff, parents, and community members to have strong partnerships, resources, and support** for building their own capacity to work with each other and with students.

**Figure 1 |** Implementing social emotional learning (SEL) through an equity approach. (*SEL Advisory Group (1), 2022*)

### Social Emotional Learning Instruction is Rooted in Brain Research

Social emotional learning not only develops important standalone skills for emotional regulation and awareness of one's place in a social context, but the principles undergird the very process of learning. Research has revealed that careful attention to SEL strengthens instruction as a whole.

Over three decades of brain research by cognitive psychologists and other scientists has provided evidence about optimal learning conditions - evidence that can be applied to instruction. This research was mobilized in part by President H.W. Bush's designation of the 1990s as the "[Decade of the Brain](#)," which was intended to "enhance public awareness of the benefits to be derived from brain research" (Bush, 1990). Since then, numerous studies across disciplines such as biology, neuroscience, psychology, and developmental science have built our collective understanding of human brain development.

Peer-reviewed studies gathered by the Science of Learning and Development Alliance affirm key findings about how relationships and social or cultural contexts impact learning for children and adults ([Cantor et al., 2019](#); [Darling-Hammond et al., 2020](#); [Osher et al., 2020](#)). As noted by Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), "[s]cholars in learning sciences have emphasized that developing these kinds of skills requires a different kind of teaching and learning than that emphasized in prior eras of education when learning was conceptualized as the acquisition of facts and teaching as the transmission of information to be taken in and used 'as is'" (p. 100). For example, research has shown that simply asking people to memorize an answer does not build higher order thinking skills, compared to instruction that uses inquiry and investigation opportunities. The brain's architecture is developed by the presence of warm, consistent, supportive relationships and positive experiences and perceptions (Darling-Hammond et al.,

2020). These relationships are what foster social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive competencies that everyone - regardless of age - needs in order to learn and develop.

## **Neuroplasticity and SEL**

Neuroscience, the brain, emotional regulation, resilience, trauma, oppression, and wellbeing intersect. Understanding these mechanisms is at the core of the rationale that necessitates SEL in schools and classrooms.

Our brains learn, change, and adapt to our environments and experiences by creating, strengthening, and pruning neural pathways throughout our lifetime, connecting new information to existing knowledge and schema (Hammond, 2014; Perry, 2009). This ability is called **neuroplasticity**, and it allows us to change the way our brains work. It is use dependent: what we use gets stronger. Neuroplasticity is fundamental to the very concept of learning, but it is also a key element of social emotional development and trauma healing. Predictable, consistent, positive, and healthy social and physical environments and relationships can help our brains to fully develop, strengthen pathways that regulate our nervous systems, and prime the body for both regulation and learning new content (Perry, 2009). This is the foundation of resilience.

## **Trauma and Stress Impact Learning**

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, many students faced traumatic experiences and toxic stress<sup>1</sup>, both of which can shape their classroom experiences. From high-stakes testing to complex social group dynamics, school itself can add its own stressors to a student's life. Acknowledging how these adverse experiences can impact student learning is a core benefit of SEL practices in schools. SEL advances academic learning by helping students recognize the emotional state they are in, and if they are dysregulated<sup>2</sup>, equips them with tools to return to regulated states so they can use their "higher" cortical networks to learn. Helping students name their emotions and cultivate resilience provides students with tools for academic success. Further, SEL also raises awareness among educators and school leaders about the impact trauma and other forms of toxic stress can have on how students learn. A comprehensive SEL approach acknowledges systems and structures that perpetuate harm, and uses an upstream approach to preventing the sources of trauma.

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<sup>1</sup> The prolonged activation of the body's stress response (Burke Harris, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Emotion dysregulation is defined as patterns of emotional experience or expression that interfere with goal-directed activity (Thompson, 2019).

Our brain looks for clues in our physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and psychological environment to unconsciously keep us safe.<sup>3</sup> Microaggressions, oppression, and trauma are all threats to our social engagement system and cue the nervous system to respond to danger (Hammond, 2014). If a person is dysregulated they will have a “difficult time benefiting from educational ... efforts targeted at, or requiring, ‘higher’ cortical networks” (Perry, 2019, p. 145). We cannot use the cortical region of our brain that helps us learn at school until our nervous system returns to a regulated state.

Dysregulation can be healthy when it keeps us safe from danger. However, too much dysregulation can lead to, as Dr. Nadine Burke Harris (2018) calls it, “toxic stress” and trauma. The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES) published in 1998 was foundational in tying adversity early in childhood to adult quality of life. While the ACES study enrolled only middle class white participants, it showed that adversity is very common in the human experience and that we all adapt. If trauma is unmitigated, it can cause changes in our neural pathways, bodies, coping, and even our genetics (Burke Harris, 2018; Felitti et al., 1998). According to the CDC (2022), 61% of adults experience at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE), with many underserved groups experiencing disproportionate rates of ACEs. Many scholars and advocates expanded the ACEs lens to include systematic forms of trauma and oppression including poverty and racism, recognizing that these factors impact the brain and wellbeing via the same pathways and mechanisms as the 10 initially identified ACEs.

These processes may be best explained in story. Have you ever been hiking and encountered a bear in the woods? Even if not, you can imagine that it would cause your body to instantly move into a protective response: fleeing the situation, fighting the assault, fawning to mollify an attacker, or freezing in place. Our bodies create chemicals, like adrenaline and cortisol, which are designed to keep us safe from the “bear” in our lives, by mobilizing the needed bodily reactions to get to safety. After the bear wanders away, uninterested in us, it takes time for those chemicals to get out of our system.

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<sup>3</sup> Vocalizations, facial expressions, and gestures can all cue threats or safety depending on their interpretation in our brains (Porges, 2018). Clues for safety and threats enter our brain through our limbic system (our “lizard brain”). If safety is detected, the lizard brain passes the information up to our cortex region (our “thinking brain”) that allows thinking and reason and where we attach it to existing schema (Hammond, 2014; Perry, 2019). This state allows for the most new learning. Regulation can occur through interpreting our social environment safely via our ventral vagal pathway (our “social engagement system” within the parasympathetic nervous system). The social engagement system provides mechanisms for co-regulation through play, cooperative behaviors and intimacy (Porges, 2018). However, if a threat is detected, the lizard brain works with our autonomic nervous system to respond. That can look like the sympathetic and/or parasympathetic nervous systems sending our bodies into fight/flight/freeze and releasing hormones like cortisol and adrenaline (Perry, 2009). Activation in the threat detection systems of our brain decreases access to the cortex region of our brain, causing our thinking brain to be hijacked by our limbic system (Porges, 2018; [FtMyersFamPsych](#), 2012).

But what if in your life, you experienced coming across a metaphorical bear every day? What if traumatizing experiences are a part of your daily life? Your body gets very good at moving into a protective mode, activating your body's stress response and suppressing functions that aren't directly involved in the stress response, like digestion or deep thinking. We can get so good at responding to danger that even when we are faced with non-threatening situations, we can still react as if we are face-to-face with a bear. Our body may not see the difference after a while. The danger of keeping those protective chemicals in our system is that they become neurotoxins and can damage our neural systems. This is the impact of toxic stress. It also makes it harder for people to be in their optimal mode for learning; however, it is important to note that people must not be defined by their trauma. Fortunately, we have knowledge of what's helpful, and neuroplasticity allows people to adapt.

### **SEL Cultivates Resilience**

Practicing SEL increases our ability to access the learning parts of our brain and our capacity for long term resilience. Self-awareness and self-management help people calm their nervous systems as they increase their abilities to name feelings and modulate arousal states (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2018). Long term access to regulation keeps our nervous systems working optimally.

CASEL's Focal Constructs support equitable and culturally-affirming learning environments that help bring students' authentic and whole selves to the learning community. The Focal Constructs of *belonging*, *agency*, and *identity* are also environmental prerequisites for our nervous system to feel safe and a part of a group (Porges, 2018). Other SEL abilities like social awareness and collaborative problem solving help us be in community. Relationships activate oxytocin, our feel-good hormone, and regulate our bodies via our polyvagal system (Hammond, 2014). Building strong SEL neural pathways helps individuals regulate their emotional state so they can learn and prevent or mitigate toxic stress, trauma, and its impacts.

### **Equity is Critical in SEL System Integration**

In order to support all students' learning, SEL must center equity and culturally responsive practices. It must also address system factors to students' social and emotional states (classroom, building, and district). We know environments impact the ability of the brain to detect safety (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2018; Burke Harris, 2018; Hammond, 2014; Perry, 2019). Oppression and marginalization (like poverty, racism, microaggressions) are threats to the



social engagement systems of our brain; ongoing, they can prime our brains to be on high alert (Hammond, 2014). On the other hand, inclusion, feeling a part of a group and that your identity is valued, are all signals of safety to the social engagement system. Two of the SEL Focal Constructs, *belonging* and *identity* should include culturally responsive practices, making learning relevant by expanding on students' schema, and integrating cultural ways of knowing into all content areas (Hammond, 2014). Many culturally significant practices like drumming, rhythm, chanting, deep breathing, and play are known to help regulate our nervous systems (Perry, 2019).

By contrast, exclusionary discipline practices disproportionately impact students of color, contributing to a lack of belonging in their school communities. When students are excluded from community as a form of punishment, this can trigger the social engagement system and signals to us that we are in danger. For these reasons, we recommend moving away from systems that center punishment and toward restorative practices that help students heal, learn, and grow in community.

### **Adult SEL Helps Everyone Regulate**

Regulated adults help students better regulate themselves. People co-regulate using mirror neurons to attune to people around us (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2018; Perry, 2019). The same mechanisms that support student learning also support adult wellbeing.

SEL isn't something that fixes everything. Rather, it is a series of ongoing practices that help us navigate life's complex pathways. SEL presents a powerful opportunity to help heal individuals and communities. Adults play a key role in fostering environments and creating the conditions that are conducive to student learning through modeling and practicing SEL together.

## Benefits of Social Emotional Learning

### Social Emotional Learning Supports Student Academic Success

SEL approaches not only provide benefits to a student's social emotional skills, but these approaches also provide benefits to student academic success. While there have been several studies on this topic, one of the largest studies was a 2011 meta-analysis that reviewed findings from 213 school-based SEL programs and involved over 270,00 students in total ([Durlak et al., 2011](#)). One of the key findings from that meta-analysis was that compared to the control groups, the students who participated in SEL "...demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance that reflected an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement" ([Durlak et al., 2011](#), p. 405). Additionally, strong SEL abilities are associated with long-term outcomes such as increased graduation rates, greater college completion, and ability to obtain stable employment ([Jones et al., 2015](#)).

Put simply, **relationships and context matter for learning**. Evidence continues to show that supporting SEL in the academic context improves learning. As our scientific understanding of *how we learn* has evolved, so too must our understanding and practice of *how we teach and relate*.

### Social Emotional Learning is a Lever for Equity

SEL elevates underlying personal and social factors that shape a student's experience as a learner. Thoughtful SEL instruction considers the importance of core needs that can disproportionately impact students because of race, gender, and other social categories.

The [National Equity Project](#) (2022) describes how social emotional learning helps contextualize the learning process, which gives space to recognize inequities and other systemic barriers:

*The promise of social and emotional development as a lever for increasing educational equity rests on the capacity of educators to understand that all learning is social and emotional and all learning is mediated by relationships that sit in a sociopolitical, racialized context – for all children, not just those who are black and brown. (para. 1, emphasis in original)*

Students may face other immediate barriers to learning. Any caregiver or educator knows that learning is much easier when a child's basic human needs are met - when they're nourished, when they feel connected to what they're learning, and when they feel trust and a sense of

belonging. On the contrary, teaching is challenging when a child is hungry, anxious, stressed, exhausted, or has other unmet needs. Expecting an individual student to simply *choose* to learn, ignoring the broader *context* in which they are trying to learn, is unrealistic (and can be frustrating for both learners and educators). Both supports and stressors are situated in a community context that is driven by relationships - with themselves, their peers, parents and other adults, and to the resources they can access. Surrounding these resources and relationships is a wider context that is social, political, and racialized, even when it is unseen by individuals:

*SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities. (CASEL, 2021a, para. 2)*

As noted in the [Aspen Institute's 2018 report](#) about racial equity and SEL, “[m]ost educators and school system leaders have good intentions and are committed to equity. But good intentions do not obviate the need to understand historical context and the role of race, racism, white privilege, and implicit bias holding students back” (p. 3). As noted in numerous studies, race and gender have played a role in the education system as early as preschool. Black children are expelled from preschool classrooms at 3.6 times the rate of White children (Gilliam, 2016). In K-12 schools nationally, while Black and Latino/a/e/x students comprise less than 40% of the school population across the country, nearly half of students arrested for school-based incidents are Black and Latino/a/e/x (U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education, 2014). When layering marginalized identities, the disadvantage compounds, as one student noted in a report by the Gay-Straight Alliance Network (2018):

*When you're talking about the [School to Prison Pipeline] you do need to consider every piece of someone's identity. So if you're a youth of color and you're also LGBT you are at a higher risk of being pushed out of school because...of racism within our school system and because of homophobia in our school system. (p. 5)*

**“All learning is social and emotional,”** the National Equity Project reminds us (2022). SEL entails paying attention to those social and emotional elements of learning, teaching, and cultivating affirming school cultures. That space to pay attention allows a school to notice ways inequities are shaping students’ experiences of school - which in turn shape each student’s individual academic outcome. SEL offers a framework for understanding how student achievement can be enhanced by recognizing and appreciating the unique identities which have

been historically viewed as a deficit. Further, SEL can help equip students to understand their social context and develop greater agency to guide their growth.

### **Social Emotional Learning as a Systemic Approach**

SEL is critical to learning, to human connection, and to creating caring, just, inclusive, and healthy schools. In Alex Venet's book, *Equity-Centered Trauma Informed Education* (2021), she suggests that schools need to understand how inequity causes harm and examine how the conditions within schools "cause, exacerbate, or perpetuate trauma" (Venet, 2021, p. xviii). Her research advocates for shifting away from solely addressing the *impact* of trauma in students to addressing the *causes* of trauma by finding solutions in transformed structures and systems.

SEL instruction that focuses solely on individual students, and not the social systems around them, can in fact exacerbate inequities and further harm students. It is critical to "[e]xamine and interrogate how SEL frameworks have been weaponized against Black and Brown young people in schools," and "[i]dentify if there are ways that SEL might be used in [the] classroom, school, or workplace with punitive and disciplinary measures attached," notes the Communities for Just Schools Fund (2020, p. 48). A comprehensive SEL framework encompasses changes on the levels of school policy and culture, recognizing that student actions and attitudes are influenced by their contexts and not their individual choices alone.

An SEL approach should seek to dismantle unjust systems, create environments that prioritize student voice and agency, foster wellbeing, and dedicate time and space for students to make sense of their experiences. When students' identities are validated, they feel a sense of belonging and agency to make positive changes in their lives and for the world.

### **Social Emotional Learning Rests Within Larger Cultural Contexts**

Different cultural models ground students and educators in their SEL journey. According to [Marisa Crowder](#) (2020) from Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific, "Culture shapes how we view the world around us by influencing how we view ourselves in relation to others. Therefore, understanding our students' cultures is an important first step to adapting SEL practices to students' social-emotional needs" (para. 2). Crowder specifically names the distinction between cultures that assume individualistic versus collectivistic values:

Individualistic cultures	Collectivistic cultures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● prioritize personal goals</li> <li>● place the individual at the center of experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● prioritize the needs of the group</li> <li>● place communal goals over personal ones</li> </ul>
<p>“Members of individualistic cultures, such as White and middle-class individuals, are more likely to adopt an independent model of self, which is defined in terms of how they are unique, and different, from others (e.g., I am smart, I am funny).”</p>	<p>“Members of collectivistic cultures, which may more frequently include racial minority and working-class individuals, are more likely to adopt an interdependent model of self, which is defined based on interpersonal relationships (e.g., I am a team player, I am a sister).”</p>

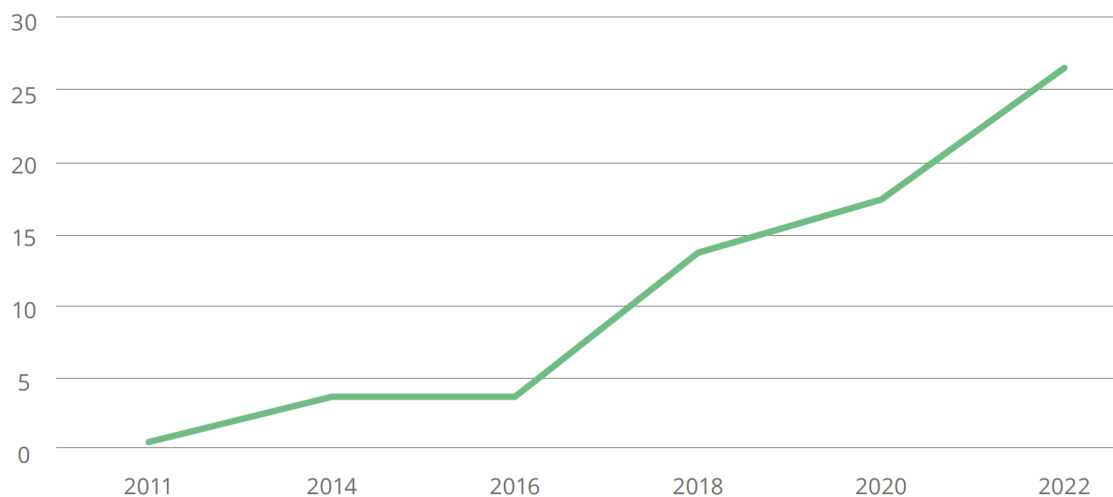
**Figure 2 |** Contrasting individualistic and collectivistic cultural models. From “[Key Considerations for Promoting Culturally Relevant SEL During COVID-19](#),” by M. Crowder, 2020, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific, paras. 3–4 ([https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/blogs/blog26\\_key-considerations-for-promoting-SEL-during-covid-19.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/blogs/blog26_key-considerations-for-promoting-SEL-during-covid-19.asp)).

The difference between collectivistic and individualistic cultural models can lead to distinctly different emphases of social emotional learning. SEL instruction cannot reach students without first understanding the cultural contexts in which they are raised. Further, SEL that elevates or privileges norms and values of individualistic cultures, which are dominant in the United States, can marginalize students from collectivistic cultures, deepening existing racial, ethnic, class, and gender disparities.

## National Context: Model Frameworks and Standards

Every state in the country, including Oregon, has already adopted social emotional learning standards for early childhood/pre-kindergarten ([Dermody & Dusenbury, 2022](#)). However, the need for SEL continues into elementary and secondary education. For kindergarten to high school (K-12), 27 states currently have SEL Competencies and 44 have developed implementation guidance to districts and schools ([Dermody & Dusenbury, 2022](#), pp. 3–4). The advisory group consulted many other states’ models for K-12 SEL standards in developing the recommendations for Oregon in this report.

### States with K-12 SEL Competencies



**Figure 3 |** Growth of states with K-12 SEL Competencies (also referenced as Standards) over time. From “[2022 Social and Emotional Learning State Scorecard Scan](#)” by C. Dermody and L. Dusenbury, 2022, Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (<https://casel.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/2022-State-Scan.pdf>).

In examining models from other states, the Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group searched for comprehensive, balanced, and equity-driven constructs, such as those of [Transformative SEL](#) and the [Educational Trust](#), which are described later in this section. The Group searched for state models that did not focus solely on individual students but also on the school systems and communities that embrace and support them. The Group also looked for models that balanced interior and exterior dimensions of social and emotional development. Adequate models did not solely provide written, observable standards and defined processes (exteriors) but included and supported the diverse values, viewpoints, and transformative natures of the individuals and communities that generate them (interiors). Some state models demonstrated elements of the

integrative balance we might seek in Oregon’s recommendations: they defined and honored the dynamic relationships within and among each of four salient quadrants, which can illustrate the ways exterior and interior dimensions interconnect with individual and community levels of development, as shown in the accompanying table.

	Interior	Exterior
Individual	<p><b>Quadrant 1: “I”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Why I do</li> <li>● Transformative SEL</li> <li>● Identity, Agency, Curiosity, Sense of Belonging</li> <li>● Mindsets, Beliefs, Assumptions</li> <li>● Dispositions, Feelings</li> <li>● Thoughts</li> <li>● Urges</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quadrant 2: “It”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What I do</li> <li>● Original CASEL Competencies</li> <li>● Self-management, Self/Social Awareness, Decision-making</li> <li>● Behaviors</li> <li>● Physiological States</li> <li>● Student Standards Fundamentals</li> <li>● Individual Assessments</li> <li>● Developmental Continuum</li> </ul>
Community	<p><b>Quadrant 3: “We”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Why we do</li> <li>● Social &amp; Cultural Norms</li> <li>● Relationship Skills, Collaborative Problem Solving, Belonging</li> <li>● Worldviews</li> <li>● Guiding Principles</li> <li>● School Climate &amp; Culture</li> <li>● Friendships</li> <li>● Peer Group Beliefs/Expectations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quadrant 4: “Its”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What we do</li> <li>● Communities, Families, Caregivers, Schools, Classrooms</li> <li>● Social, Political, Economic Systems</li> <li>● Frameworks</li> <li>● System Standards Fundamentals</li> <li>● Conditions for Thriving</li> <li>● Group and School Data</li> <li>● Events</li> </ul>

**Figure 4 |** A Four-Quadrant Model of SEL Practices. Adapted from “An Example of Integral Pedagogy,” by L. D. Feldmann, 2007, *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, 2(2), pp. 26–42.

The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group reviewed nearly 15 frameworks from various states including Washington, California, North Dakota, New York, Illinois, Indiana, and Montana. In addition to researching other state frameworks, the Group consulted frameworks developed by the education equity organization, Education Trust. Our scan found that frameworks used by most other states that we reviewed, as well as Education Trust’s model, are based on the frameworks developed by the leading national organization for SEL: CASEL. This section outlines some of the top lessons from frameworks developed by CASEL, Education Trust, and the state of California.

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

CASEL's original framework for SEL focuses on student competencies, and was updated in 2019 to include a recognition of the conditions in which teaching and learning occurs, as well as to relate to the community as a whole. For example, the original framework included these five student competencies:<sup>4</sup>

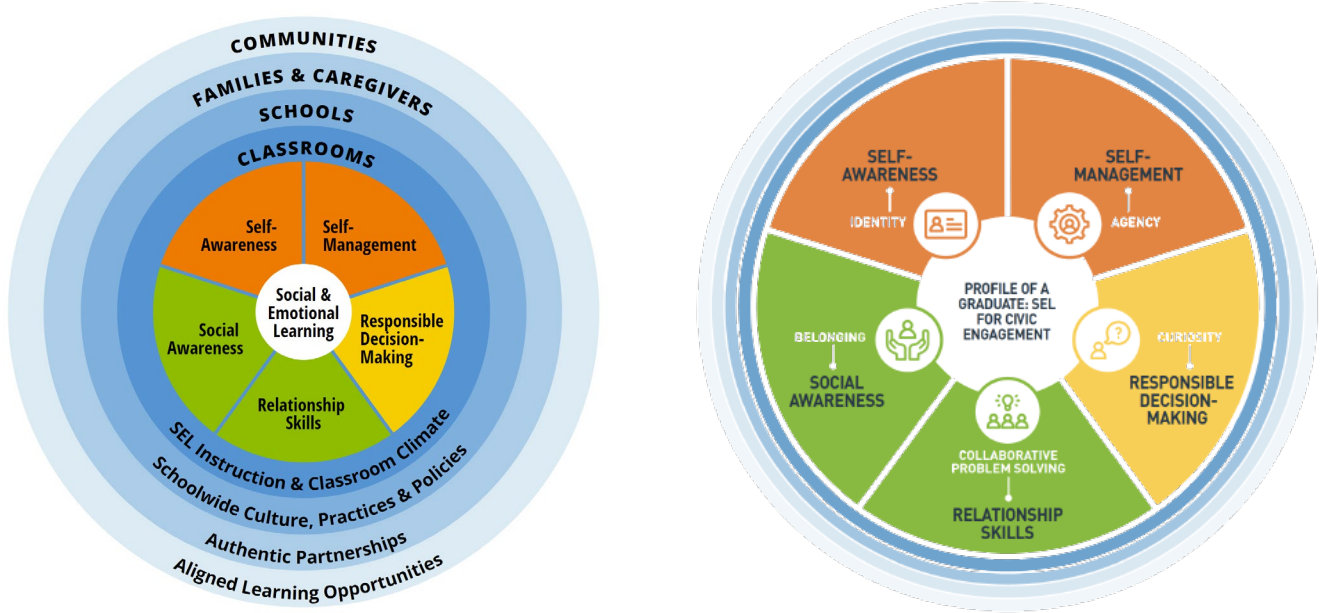
- **Self-Awareness:** Understanding culture, thoughts, feelings, and potential, and how these can influence behaviors and beliefs.
- **Self-Management:** Ability to manage thoughts, emotions, and beliefs.
- **Responsible Decision-Making:** Ability to think critically, analyze impact, support individual and collective wellbeing.
- **Relationship Skills:** Ability to communicate, work with others, manage conflict and disagreements, and solve problems together.
- **Social Awareness:** Ability to be aware of how we understand others, empathize with others, and understand how cultural norms influence belonging.

The use and structure of the CASEL framework has evolved over the past 5 years, in part prompted by critiques from education scholars who noted the original framework put too much emphasis on what students need to know and do and not enough on the conditions at school or in their environment. Equity advocates noted that the foundational CASEL SEL competencies were largely based on white dominant culture values. In response, the updated version of the framework, sometimes referred to as “Transformative SEL,” broadens the focus beyond just what students need to learn and do, and includes other system aspects noted in the figure shown. The concept of “focal constructs” was layered on to the original framework in a recognition that identity, agency, belonging, collaborative problem-solving, and curiosity are key features of an effective SEL framework.

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<sup>4</sup> “[SEL 101: What are the core competencies and key settings](https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/#the-casel-5),” video by CASEL, available at: <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/#the-casel-5>.





**Figure 5 |** “CASEL Wheel” models of student competencies, Transformative SEL Focal Constructs and school conditions to support learning (CASEL, 2022).

### CASEL’s Transformative Social Emotional Focal Constructs

CASEL defines its concept of [Transformative SEL](#) as a “process whereby young people and adults build strong, respectful, and lasting, relationships that facilitate co-learning to critically examine root causes of inequity, and to develop collaborative solutions that lead to personal, community, and societal well-being” (2021b, Defining Transformative SEL section). This approach extends SEL beyond intrapersonal development to help students and adults understand themselves with the context of a society, with all its inequities and possibilities for change.

Transformational SEL includes several key components: partnerships across the student-adult divide, to allow shared decision-making; a focus on student agency in improving their schools and communities, through civic action and social change; and instruction that integrates students’ lived realities of race, class, culture, and other identities.

Original CASEL Student Competencies	Transformative SEL Focal Constructs (layers on top of the CASEL competencies)
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Self-Awareness</b></p> <p>Understanding culture, thoughts, feelings, and potential, and how these can influence behaviors and beliefs.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Identity</b></p> <p>How students view themselves and adults, recognizing that identity is multidimensional and dynamic.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Self-Management</b></p> <p>Ability to manage thoughts, emotions, and beliefs.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Agency</b></p> <p>Having voice and making decisions about learning and career goals, overcoming challenges, solving problems collaboratively.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Social Awareness</b></p> <p>Ability to be aware of how we understand others, empathize with others, understand how cultural norms influence belonging.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Belonging</b></p> <p>Ability to co-create learning spaces, feeling recognized and involved in building relationships and knowledge.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Relationship Skills</b></p> <p>Ability to communicate, work with others, manage conflict and disagreements, and solve problems together.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Collaborative Problem-Solving</b></p> <p>Capacity to effectively engage in a process where two or more people solve a problem together and share knowledge, skills, and effort to reach a solution.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Responsible Decision-Making</b></p> <p>Ability to think critically, analyze impact, support individual and collective wellbeing.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Curiosity</b></p> <p>Desire to pursue knowledge and new experiences.</p>

## Education Trust Framework

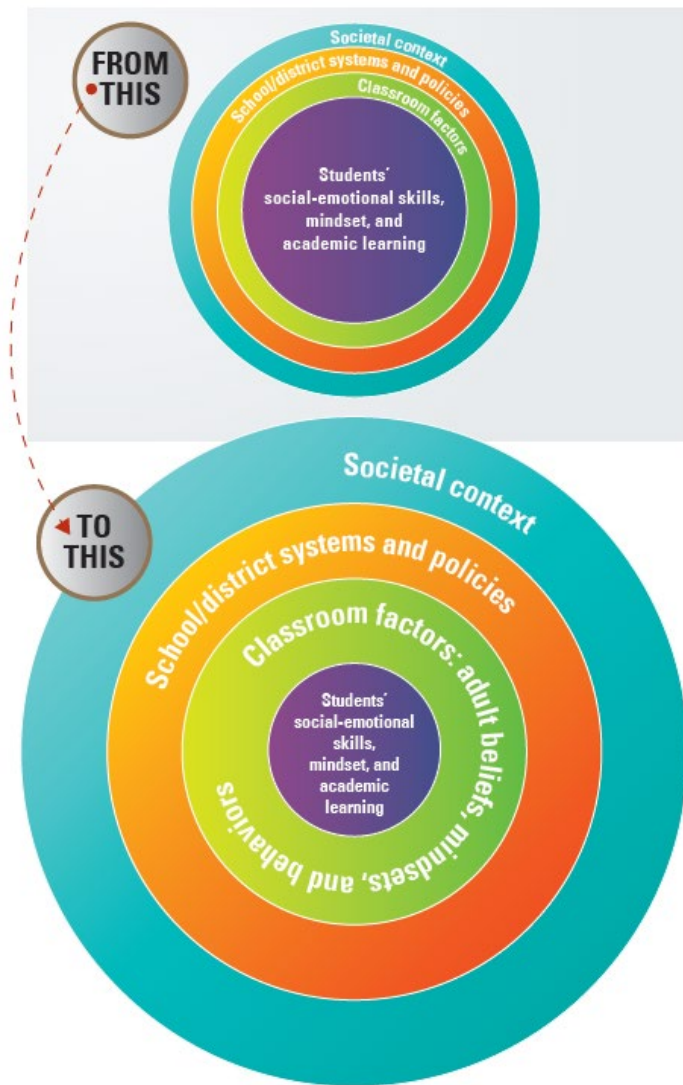
Education Trust developed a comprehensive framework for SEL with focus groups around the country which included students and families of color. The results, found in its 2020 report, [Social, Emotional, and Academic Development Through an Equity Lens](#), add an explicit recognition that classroom factors such as adult beliefs, mindsets, and behaviors have an impact on students’ social emotional abilities, mindset, and academic learning. This approach specifically shifts the framing of social emotional learning in two ways which depart from the

CASEL model. First, it frames SEL as learning that incorporates social and emotional skills into academic learning, not separate from academic learning (Duchesneau, 2020). Second, the Education Trust report recommends SEL frameworks include not only *student* learning and change, but also ensure *adults* create the conditions needed for students' social, emotional, and academic wellbeing (Figure 6). **In other words, to create the conditions for social, emotional, and academic development of students, a focus needs to be on the adults (school staff and parents) and the climate and culture of schools:**

*This requires shifting the focus away from “fixing kids” and toward addressing the adult beliefs and mindsets as well as school and district policies that create the learning environment. It also requires school and district leaders to consider the context in which students live. Societal realities (e.g., racism, sexism, homophobia), individual realities (e.g., socioeconomic status, family dynamics, experiences in schools, access to opportunities), and cultural background all influence social, emotional, and academic development. (Duchesneau, 2020)*

Education Trust provides a framework for schools and districts to reconsider the student's school experience as a whole: does the school help each student feel supported and that they belong, as well as feel challenged appropriately to allow them to grow? Policies, school culture, and individual educator biases are key factors that collectively shape the experience a student has as they progress through school. Students seen as “broken” will be targeted with individual interventions to “fix” them, when it is actually the wider school system that creates barriers to those students' ability to succeed. Changing the school context through policy reforms and educator and administrator preparation may go further to address the gaps and disparities than a focus on individual students as the ones needing to change.

## SHIFTING THE FOCUS



**Figure 6 | [Education Trust's Framework](#) for Social Emotional and Academic Development:** Student needs and development are still at the center of the model, but there is heightened attention on other factors that shape the student's experience, including society, school systems, and the behaviors and beliefs of adults they regularly interact with. From "Social, Emotional, and Academic Development Through an Equity Lens," by N. Duchesneau, 2020, Education Trust.

## California Department of Education SEL Standards

The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group consulted many other states' models for K-12 SEL standards in developing the recommendations in this report and found particular resonance with California's Department of Education guidance to embed equity-focused Transformative-SEL across the education system.

Both the "Standards" and the "Framework" work groups in the Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group elevated California's [Social and Emotional Learning Guiding Principles](#) as a blueprint for conceptualizing a framework and for how the SEL Standards could be written for Oregon in order to ensure all children have the opportunity to thrive (California Department of Education, 2018). The Framework work group also appreciated California's resource "[California Transformative Social and Emotional Learning Competencies and Conditions for Thriving](#)" which asserts that "SEL is a dynamic, reciprocal, nonlinear process which calls for fundamental shifts in systems, structures, policies, and practices, which create the conditions in which optimal teaching and learning occur. These tools are simply contributions to an expansive, ongoing, iterative set of actions" (California Department of Education, 2021). Likewise, the Standards work group found resonance within this resource around California's core tenets regarding Social and Emotional Learning Competencies.

### California's Core Beliefs about Social and Emotional Learning Competencies

"An unintended consequence of articulating traditional developmental SEL competencies is that they can, and have, been used "against" children who are not members of the dominant culture as a means to assert the social, cultural, linguistic, and behavioral norms of the dominant culture. It is imperative that the T-SEL Competencies are not used to perpetuate injustice" ([California Department of Education](#), 2021, p. 7).

Users must also understand the intended purposes of the SEL Competencies:

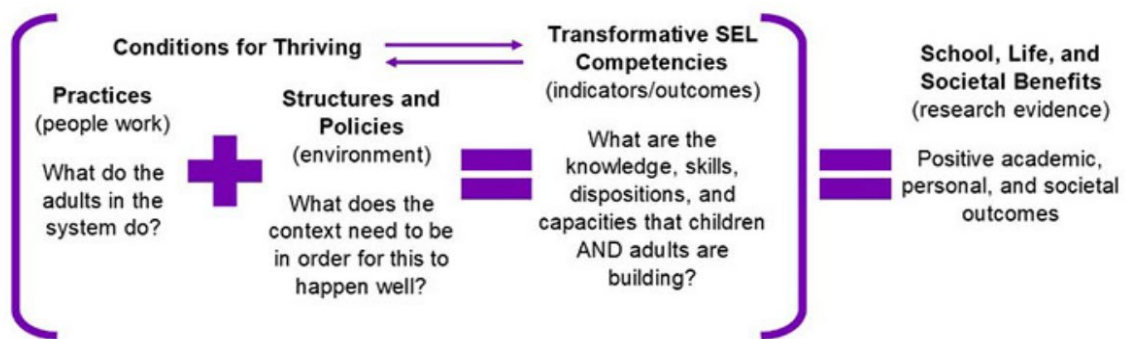
- Illustrative indicators, not prescriptive and not comprehensive
- Not standards
- Not assessment or evaluation tools
- Use indicators that include behaviors but also "knowledge, habits, mindsets, dispositions, processes, and experiences"
- Address both student and adult SEL development
- Additive as students age and progress
- Braided, not discrete

Strengths of the “California Transformative Social and Emotional Learning Competencies and Conditions for Thriving” noted by members of the Standards work group included (California Department of Education, 2021):

- How the SEL competencies and Conditions for Thriving interact to support students, educators, and families in a dynamic and reciprocal manner, building over a lifetime (see Figure 7)
- Research-based rationales with an equity focus
- Positively phrased goals: student statements began with “I can...;” community statements began with “We can...”
- The inclusion of adult social emotional development as part of the curriculum

These elements seemed both important and possible for Oregon to translate into its own SEL standards.

California’s standards were written across grade level bands, which could ease implementation and provide nuance to what is meant by developmentally appropriate. However, the Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group ended up recommending standards that do not use grade level bands, in order to ensure learning is developmentally appropriate given a student’s unique context, as well as linguistic and ability levels.



**Figure 7 |** How the Competencies and Conditions Work Together to Support Positive Outcomes. From “[California Transformative Social and Emotional Learning Competencies and Conditions for Thriving](https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/se/documents/tselcompcnd.docx),” by California Department of Education, 2021, (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/se/documents/tselcompcnd.docx>).

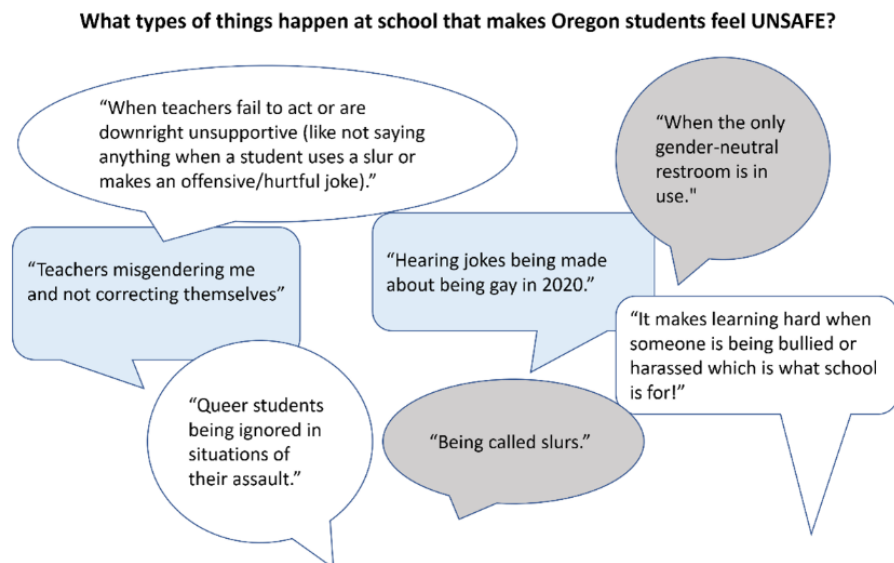
## Oregon Context

National themes translate locally to Oregon schools. Since Oregon students face many of the same strains and challenges in this historical moment, and with electronic media often dissolving the distinctions and distances from state to state, the lessons from national organizations and from other states can accelerate Oregon’s framework development.

The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group also consulted reports that elevated the voices of Oregon students. This research identified areas of need that the state’s SEL framework will seek to address: school climate, mental health supports, and student agency. Mental health supports, specifically for students with one or more marginalized identities, are a corroborated concern in Oregon schools. Oregon youth also want to develop greater agency in decision-making that impacts them in their schools.

### School Climate

ODE has engaged students around the state who possess multiple intersecting marginalized identities, most recently with the development of the [LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan](#) in 2020. Through partnerships with education service districts, community-based organizations, and school districts, students attended focus groups in the South Coast, the Dalles, Southern Oregon, and the Portland metropolitan area. Several student comments are included in Figure 8, illustrating some of the ways students feel unsafe in their schools. The themes that these students identified about what’s important to them affirm what the brain science discussed earlier says: the conditions in which students learn are as important as the academic content they are learning.

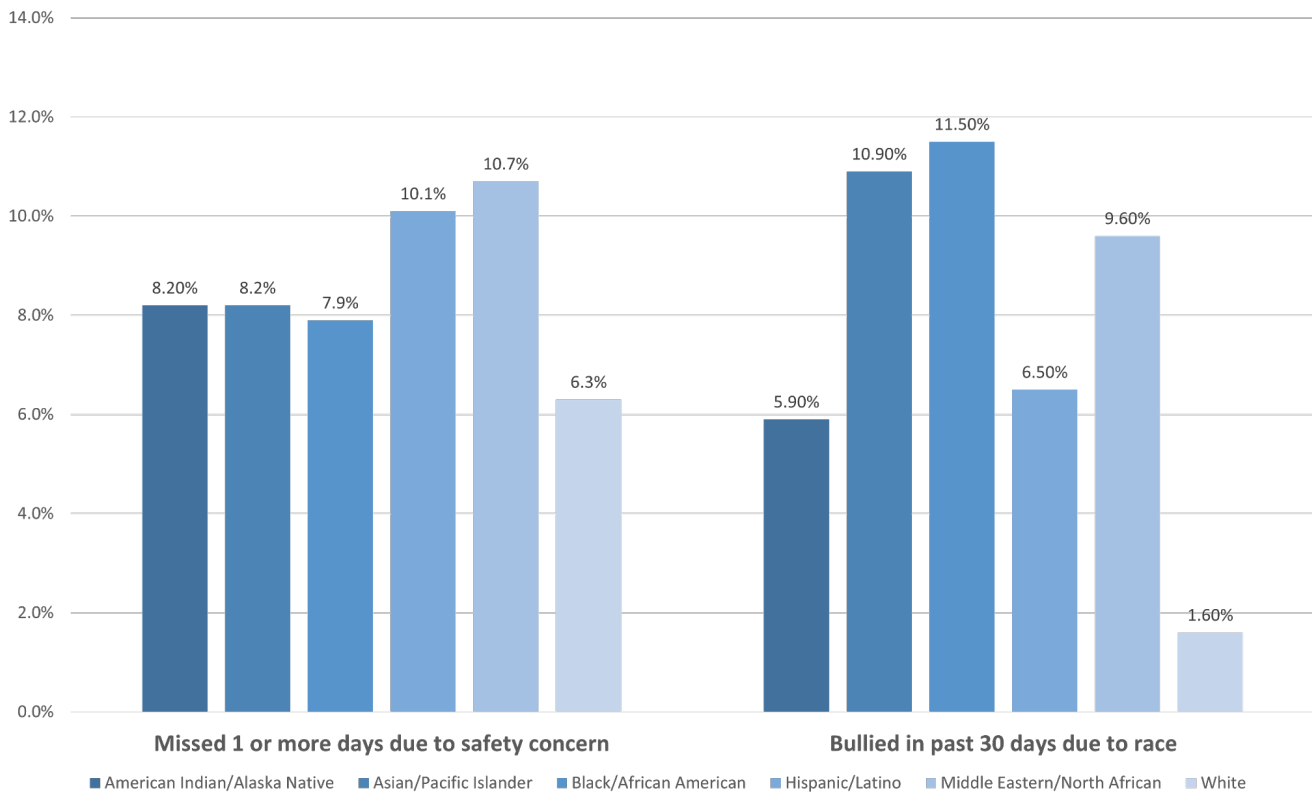


**Figure 8 |** Oregon student quotes for development of LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan. From [“LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan,”](#) Oregon Department of Education, 2020c, p. 32 (<https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/Documents/LGBTQ2SIA+%20Student%20Success%20Plan.pdf>).

The types of experiences identified in the LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan focus groups play out each day in schools across the state. Racism can layer on top of homophobia and transphobia, leaving LGBTQ2SIA+ students from racial or ethnic minorities facing even more barriers from their educational system. Oregon Health Authority (OHA)’s 2019 wellbeing [survey](#) found that teenagers who identify as Hispanic/Latino/a/e/x, Middle Eastern/North African, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Black/African American were more likely to say that they missed school at least once in the previous 30 days due to a safety concern compared to White students. When asked if they have been bullied based on their race or ethnicity within the last 30 days, Black/African American students and Asian/Pacific Islanders were the most likely to say “yes,” and White students were the least likely (Oregon Health Authority, 2019; see Figure 9).

Though there are clear differences in how students experience school, SEL can benefit everyone by addressing emotional and mental health in schools, including students from the White dominant culture. For example, when 8th graders were asked in [OHA’s 2019 Healthy Teens Survey](#) “Would you say that in general your emotional and mental health is excellent, very good, fair, or poor,” White students were among the three racial/ethnic groups most likely to say “poor,” after American Indian/Alaska Native and Middle-Eastern/North African students.





**Figure 9 | Student academic achievement is constrained by school absences, which can happen when a student does not feel safe in school. In Oregon, 6.3 - 10.7% of teens reported missed school days due to safety concerns. Students that were bullied due to race face additional safety concerns. SEL encourages schools to disrupt racist or other threatening behavior, to improve student safety and sense of belonging in school. Chart adapted from “[Oregon Healthy Teens 2019 Race/Ethnicity - 11th Grade](#),” by Oregon Health Authority, 2019, pp. 4–5 (<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/BIRTHDEATHCERTIFICATES/SURVEYS/OREGONHEALTHYTEENS/Documents/2019/RaceEth/OHT2019RaceEth11.pdf>).**

## Student Mental Health Support

SEL is one of several components of mental health promotion. A [recent report by Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs](#), in partnership with OHA and the Department of Human Services, found that Latino/a/e/x youth in rural Oregon are more likely than the general population to access mental health resources because of referrals from their school, suggesting opportunities to further promote these opportunities in school. “[S]chools are an effective and

promising platform for mental health services for the Latino/a/x community” (Kim-Gervey et al., 2020, p. 11). This report, along with the [Coalition of Communities of Color’s 2021 report on behavioral health care](#), emphasizes the need for cultural relevance and resonance with programming, and access to culturally and linguistically affirming providers. As noted in the report, “there are often complex intergenerational tensions and dynamics that can affect the wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities. These particular experiences have significant implications for their physical, mental, behavioral, emotional, and spiritual health” (Coalition of Communities of Color, 2021, p. 13). While SEL is distinct from mental health services, it is a support that can bolster a school’s ability to prevent/mitigate and respond effectively to mental health concerns.

### **Student Agency and Voice**

Students recognize the need for greater agency related to the issues that impact them. [Oregon Student Voice](#) is a student-led nonprofit whose mission is to “reframe Oregon’s understanding of the student’s role in their learning by empowering all students to be active agents in shaping their education” (Oregon Student Voice, n.d.). In 2017, the organization conducted a student-led statewide survey of high school students with students from 42 high schools across the state, and did focus groups with students at 22 high schools across the state. This report surfaced many key issues that impact students’ social emotional wellbeing at school, and ultimately, their ability to learn. Figure 10 summarizes some of the key findings from the [State of Our Schools report](#).

Related to Oregon’s SEL Standards, the *State of Our Schools* report found that students directly tie their sense of safety in school to their sense of agency and power to be included in decision-making. School felt unsupportive to students when they faced limited access to school leaders and felt disconnected from the decisions made about their educational experience. One core component of SEL is providing students tools and practice for developing their voice in civic settings. Comprehensive SEL has the potential to advance districts’ efforts to create safe and supportive schools.

ANALYSIS OF STATE OF OUR SCHOOLS REPORT		
Strengths (what makes school safe and supportive)	Challenges (what makes school unsafe and unsupportive)	Opportunities & Recommendations for Change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Positive relationships with school adults</b></li> <li>● <b>Career Technical Education</b></li> <li>● <b>Engaged and informed students</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Limited access to leadership roles</b> within student government - and even there, student government ability to influence change is perceived as limited</li> <li>● <b>Limited student involvement in education decision-making</b></li> <li>● <b>Disconnection from school administrators</b></li> <li>● <b>Inconsistencies in school discipline</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Expand access to mental health services</b> - in recognition of the increasing awareness and need</li> <li>● <b>Ability to offer student feedback to teachers</b> - Only 29% said they have had at least one teacher ask for written feedback</li> <li>● <b>Prevent prejudice occurring in schools</b> - by students, teachers, administrators, school staff (speak up when bias incidents occur)</li> <li>● <b>Provide students with authentic decision-making opportunities</b></li> </ul>

**Figure 10** | ODE’s Analysis of “[State of Our Schools Report.](#)” Summarizing “State of Our Schools Report” by Oregon Student Voice, 2017 ([https://www.oregonstudentvoice.org/\\_files/ugd/bf5b79\\_e927d0df5e1648ecb2b4648ae5844efc.pdf](https://www.oregonstudentvoice.org/_files/ugd/bf5b79_e927d0df5e1648ecb2b4648ae5844efc.pdf)).

## Oregon's Existing System Strengths

Though Oregon does not have K-12 SEL standards in place, our state has many foundational assets that were consulted in the recommendation development process, which we will summarize in this section. We are proud and grateful to be able to uplift many of the promising practices that education service districts, school districts, educators, and community partners are already leading on. As Oregon advances toward building a framework and standards for implementing SEL, these highlights are intended to promote clarity about what SEL looks like on the ground and alleviate concerns that SEL is “just another unfunded mandate” that teachers and school leaders must do on their own, with little support. This feeling is real and valid given the history of education in the United States. At the same time, SEL is about shifting to an approach for adults and students to co-construct learning environments that feel safe, affirming, and caring for all. Classrooms and communities are already implementing SEL on the ground, districts and ESDs are developing their own SEL standards, and agencies are already building a firm foundation for new SEL standards to grow from, as the following examples illustrate.

### Elevating Current School-Wide SEL Practices

One example of an Oregon school already applying SEL principles and practices is Lot Whitcomb. This diverse Title 1 elementary school in North Clackamas incorporates SEL strategies to support both adult and student SEL, integrating a trauma-informed, culturally responsive pedagogy with SEL at the school, classroom, small group, and individual level. Annie Schlegel, an advisory group member and School Social Worker at Lot Whitcomb, shared about their approach to SEL:

We use our equity lens in approaching each of the SEL competencies, thinking about how each looks in non-dominant culture. We look at “the why” behind the behavior, and think about behavior as a form of communication. We ask, “how might dominant culture be showing up in my interpretation of behavior?” “Who is this a problem for?” “What is triggering me? Why?” “How can I decenter myself as the teacher?” “Whose voices are being centered? Whose are left out?” “Who is seen as the expert?” Classroom teachers recognize that cultivating a classroom ecology and environment where student voice, choice, autonomy, belonging, competence, and identity are centered are imperative to students’ SEL.

Lot Whitcomb also brings an SEL perspective into its work with the adults at the school. Their hiring practices focus on equity, seeking to recruit, hire, and retain staff that bring an equity lens that focuses on the strengths and celebration identity of diverse students. They also recognize the importance of supporting staff SEL, so that they can better support their students:

- *Teachers.* Teachers opt into one-on-one meetings with the counseling team (counselor and social worker/behavior interventionist) every other week. Teachers can identify their vicarious trauma, navigate boundaries of their professional role, and collaborate to support students' SEL. This serves as a preventative approach for getting students' needs met and supporting adult SEL.
- *Instructional assistants.* Twice monthly SEL meetings support instructional assistants. These focus on skill building, highlighting staff's strengths, and integrating identity and culturally relevant practices. Many of their instructional assistants are former North Clackamas students, mirror the racial identity of the students, and are on pathways to human service professions. Part of supporting their adult SEL is also creating opportunities for them to develop skills that are aligned with their professional goals.

Lot Whitcomb takes a school-wide approach to supporting SEL. Self-Awareness and Self-Management are supported through direct instruction at K-2 using the Zones of Regulation and 2nd Steps curriculum. SEL is integrated into pedagogy all day, starting with breakfast in the classroom and morning meeting using the Caring School Communities curriculum to build an intentional classroom community. All students practice "brain breaks" from the Mind Up curriculum daily and learn about how their brain works. Regulation rooms are available to support students who are dysregulated. Students can self-refer or be referred by an adult for a 10-minute break. Adults in this space help students co-regulate by practicing regulation strategies so that they are ready to re-enter the classroom and more ready to learn. Each classroom also has a "pause area" break space for students.

The school provides individualized supports for SEL where needed, recognizing that caregivers are crucial partners in creating structures and systems to support students' SEL. Lot Whitcomb's individualized supports include the following practices:

- One-on-one Check-In/Check-Out (CICO) for students with adults.
- Local high schools (Milwaukie and La Salle) Mentor Programs allow nearly 50 youth the opportunity to be supported by high school mentors.
- The counseling team facilitates 20 groups to support SEL skill development and coping with family systems stressors (substance use, incarceration, family separation, etc.).

- Affinity and leadership groups for students who are interested in creating spaces for their identity development.
- Community based partnerships support 2 co-located mental health therapists, a mobile food pantry, and financial support for emergencies.

Lot Whitcomb is just one Oregon school that is embedding SEL throughout the school day already, providing an example of the type of school based approaches that cultivate a caring and affirming school community where every student can experience a sense of belonging and wellbeing.

### **Elevating Current District SEL Practices**

The five year SEL implementation plan in Portland Public Schools (PPS) places a high value on adult social emotional learning as an integral part of district-wide SEL implementation. Supporting adults to practice, model, and implement SEL is a critical and foundational step for the district. This is accomplished through a three-year professional learning series that is grounded in adult SEL, cultural competence, and trauma-informed practices. Before SEL student-facing programming/curricula is rolled out in schools, all educators must receive the first year of professional learning.

Another key element of PPS' district-wide SEL implementation is the process for SEL curriculum/program adoption. The SEL department has prioritized community engagement in the instructional materials adoption process in order to identify SEL programs that will meet the unique needs and support the diverse strengths of the students and staff in the district. A primary strategy was to facilitate a district-wide engagement process in the development of the adoption selection criteria. This process took over six months, but the time spent was well worth it as it is anticipated that it will increase voice and agency among staff, students and our community partners. Though the process was not as extensive as desired given limited time and resources, it was a positive step in the direction of putting into practice key elements of district-wide SEL around developing engagement and partnerships.

### **Elevating Community Partners Already Integrating SEL Practices**

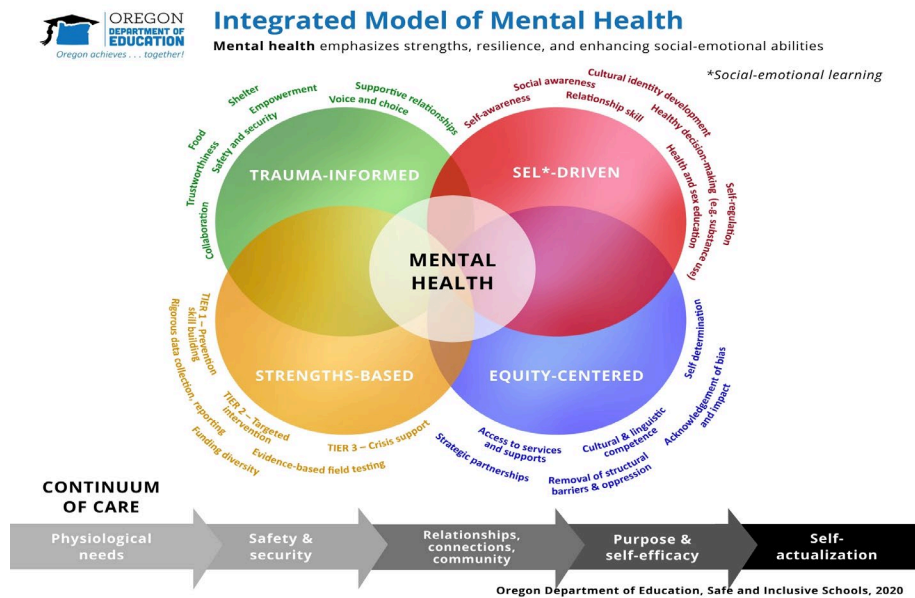
Oregon community-based organizations have also been integrating SEL practices. For instance, the Oregon Health Authority supported Mental Health Promotion and Prevention Projects (MHPP) that took place across 20 counties to support SEL efforts in more than 60 school districts in those counties. Many providers supported district and school wide suicide

prevention training and education, in addition, they facilitated SEL groups for K-12 students, using Second Step and/or Character Strong programs.

### Elevating Oregon Department of Education (ODE) Practices Already Integrating SEL

SEL is interconnected with both *what* and *how* we teach and learn. As such, ODE is already integrating SEL practices through various initiatives, which will be strengthened by the SEL standards adopted as a result of this report. Oregon’s SEL Framework will weave together elements of SEL work that are already happening in diverse disciplines, from Physical Education to Social Studies and beyond, providing coherence for students and educators:

- Integrated Model of Mental Health:** ODE has developed an Integrated Model of Mental Health to guide school-based health and mental health promotion and service provision efforts across the state. ODE has developed a number of campaigns and resources to support school communities in their mental health promotion and service delivery efforts including a [Mental Health Website](#), a [Mental Health Toolkit](#), Oregon Classroom WISE, the Care and Connection Campaign, School Safety and Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Resources, and extensive guidance and tools to support a breadth of behavioral health and health content areas.



**Figure 11 |** ODE’s Integrated Model of Mental Health. From “[Mental Health Toolkit](#),” by Oregon Department of Education, 2020d, p. 3 (<https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/Documents/ODE%20Mental%20Health%20Toolkit%202020.pdf>).

The Integrated Model of Mental Health centers mental health promotion, services and supports on **four interconnected pillars of practice**: 1) strengths-based, 2) trauma-informed, 3) social emotional learning-driven, and 4) equity-centered (as seen in Figure 11). These four pillars of practice are integrated throughout the SEL Advisory Group’s recommendations, which are mirrored in the Integrated Model of Mental Health’s values:

- Mental health fits within a continuum of care that includes all of the social determinants of health. Strengths and resilience are amplified; a focus on deficits is strongly discouraged.
  - Practices prioritize voice, choice, empowerment and transparency.
  - Basic human needs for social connection, purpose, and physical and emotional safety are integrated into the learning/teaching process, and school culture and climate.
  - Universal prevention strategies promote mental health, as well as respond to demonstrated need for Tier 1 services.
  - Equity is centered: the value framework makes “explicit acknowledgment of the inequities, disparities, racism, oppression, marginalization, insults and assaults experienced by Black, Latinx, Asian, Indian/Tribal, LGBTQ2SIA+ community members, individuals with disabilities and others, and the commitment to changing the policies, practices and systems that perpetuate these harms” (ODE, 2020b).
- 
- **Guidance to Districts for Supporting Healthy Connections:** ODE developed the Care and Connection Campaign, which includes detailed [guidance](#) for promoting care, connection, and community that embodies the principles of the Integrated Model of Mental Health on a district level. This guidance includes promising practice [examples](#) from districts across the state, highlighting the myriad ways frontier, rural, suburban, and urban districts across the state have implemented practices that are aligned with SEL concepts. ODE also passed the [Every Student Belongs rule](#) in 2020 to encourage district policies that affirm prohibition of hate speech and bias incidents.
  
  - **Every Student Belongs:** [Every Student Belongs](#) is a 2020 state rule that names the impact that discrimination and harassment can have on a student’s education (Or. Admin. R. 581-022-2312). This rule also addresses the workplace environment for school staff and leaders:



*ODE recognizes that student health and safety are the cornerstone of education and that all students are entitled to a high-quality educational experience, free from discrimination or harassment based on perceived race, color, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin, and without fear or hatred, racism or violence. (Gill, 2020, p. 1)*

This rule helps set a standard for safe and inclusive school climates, which aligns with the hopes of SEL implementation.

- **Resources to Increase Mental Health Literacy in Alignment with ODE’s Integrated Model of Mental Health:** Oregon Classroom WISE was created in response to requests from school staff, administrators, families, and community members for additional tools and resources to support the mental and emotional wellbeing of students and school staff. Rather than just offering a course on mental health topics, Oregon Classroom WISE is a suite of resources including free, online, self-guided modules for adults and youth interested in strengthening mental health and wellbeing. It includes a host of print and video resources, guided tutorials and role plays, and interviews with youth and school personnel. The content covers topics integral to SEL such as how to build safe, healthy relationships, best practices for supporting children and adolescents experiencing life challenges and distress, and skills for handling challenging behaviors. Oregon Classroom WISE was developed in collaboration with the [Mental Health Technology Transfer Center \(MHTTC\) Network](#) and the [National Center for School Mental Health](#). It is one piece of ODE's larger [Strengthening Mental Health in Education Initiative](#).
- **State Advisory Council for Special Education (SACSE) & Student Success & Strategic Plans Focused on English Language Learners, Students of Color, and Students who are LGBTQ2SIA+:** ODE partnered with communities identified as facing well-documented disparities in outcome. Together, they developed several [student success plans](#) specific to student groups the education system has historically not centered. These plans include an [American Indian/Alaska Native \(AI/AN\) State Plan](#); [African American/Black \(AA/B\) Student Success Plan](#); [Latino/a/e/x Student Success Plan](#); [LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan](#); and an [English Language Learner Strategic Plan](#). Each of these plans was developed with statewide advisory groups composed of educators, parents, students, community-based organizations, districts, education service districts, subject matter experts, and state agency staff from the respective communities. Additionally, each of these processes also included their own research and community engagement. These

processes, both on their own and taken together, articulate a shared vision towards education equity in Oregon. These plans provided a tremendous value for the Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group process. Further, as schools and districts implement these student success plans, they are enacting holistic student-centered instructional practices that are core to equity components of SEL.

- **Tribal History/Shared History Curriculum:** Authorized through state [legislation](#) in 2017, ODE has developed curriculum in multiple grades and subjects and funded the nine federally-recognized tribes in Oregon to develop individual, place-based curriculum for inclusion in K-12 schools and the [Essential Understandings of Native Americans in Oregon](#). The Transformative SEL Focal Constructs align particularly closely with two aspects of the of Essential Understandings:
  - *Transformative SEL Focal Construct **Identity*** connects specifically with the *Enduring Understanding 5: **Identity***. They define identity as “one’s understanding of who he or she is. Native American identities are alive, vibrant, and diverse (ODE, 2022, p. 11).”
  - *Transformative SEL Focal Construct: **Belonging*** connects specifically with *Enduring Understanding 6: **Lifeways***. Lifeways are described as the “way in which people live. The lifeways of native peoples’ beliefs and spiritualities continue today. Tribes continue to practice their unique cultures, traditions, and languages. Cultural values are inherent within the tribes and guide Indigenous ways of life (ODE, 2022, p. 13).”
- **Ethnic Studies Integrated Social Science Standards:** Authorized through state legislation in 2017, ODE created an advisory group to develop statewide [Social Science Standards](#) for kindergarten through grade 12. These standards, published in 2021, integrate ethnic studies topics and already include many SEL competencies. For example, kindergarten students are expected to “[e]ngage in respectful dialogue with classmates to define diversity comparing and contrasting visible and invisible similarities and differences” (ODE, 2021a, p. 1). Fifth graders are expected to develop an understanding of why individuals and groups from various ethnic and religious backgrounds have different perspectives on laws and policies (ODE, 2021a, p. 12). These two examples demonstrate understandings of identity, self-awareness, social awareness, empathy, and collaboration, which are core tenets of SEL.
- **Holocaust & Other Genocides Learning Concepts:** In June 2019, Governor Kate Brown signed SB 664 into law. The law requires school districts to provide students with

instruction on the Holocaust and other genocides, beginning in the 2020-2021 school year. Academic content standards that include specific reference to the Holocaust and other genocides will be part of the next social science standards adoption in school year 2025-2026. Until these standards are adopted, schools and teachers can use the [Grade Level Guidance for Holocaust and Genocide Objectives](#) presented in the law to develop lessons and instructions. Some of the Learning Concepts in SB 664 connect to the Transformative SEL Focal Constructs of Identity, Belonging, and Agency, Problem-Solving:

- “Develop students’ respect for cultural diversity and help students gain insight into the importance of the protection of international human rights for all people” (ODE, 2020e, p. 2);
- “Stimulate students’ reflection on the roles and responsibilities of citizens in democratic societies to combat misinformation, indifference and discrimination through tools of resistance such as protest, reform and celebration” (ODE, 2020e, p. 4);
- “Provide students with opportunities to contextualize and analyze patterns of human behavior by individuals and groups who belong in one or more categories, including perpetrator, collaborator, bystander, victim and rescuer” (ODE, 2020e, p. 5);
- “Enable students to understand the ramifications of prejudice, racism and stereotyping” (ODE, 2020e, p. 6).

SEL integrates well with Holocaust and Genocide Objectives, as part of the wider social studies curriculum. It also allows students to develop their emotional abilities to process grievous harm and trauma, which they will use when they confront the historical realities of the Holocaust and other genocides, or other social studies topics.

- **Health Education Standards:** Adopted by the State Board of Education in 2018, the [Oregon Health Education Standards](#) include all the skills/competencies identified in CASEL’s five competencies. The foundation of health education standards is to help students recognize the multiple dimensions of their health and to provide them with the skills needed to live healthy lives. Health is affected by a variety of social influences so the standards focus on identifying and understanding the diverse internal and external factors that influence health practices and behaviors among youth, including personal values, beliefs, and perceived norms. There are many opportunities for alignment with SEL skills and competencies within health education. SHAPE America has created a [Health Education and CASEL Crosswalk](#) showing the interconnectedness of SEL skills within Health Education (2020). For example, ODE’s Health Education Standards for

sixth grade describe that students are expected to “[r]ecognize factors that can affect personal health, including but not limited to family history, socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity” (ODE, 2016b, p. 24). Eighth grade students are expected to “[e]valuate personal stress and implement stress management techniques” (ODE, 2016b, p. 46). These two examples demonstrate ways Health Education can overlap with SEL, through understandings of identity, self-awareness, social awareness, promote empathy, and collaboration, all of which are core tenets of SEL.

- **Physical Education Standards:** Adopted by the State Board of Education in 2018, the [Physical Education Standards](#) provide an opportunity to enhance and reinforce SEL skills. The relationships among physical, mental, and social health have been repeatedly documented in neuroscience. Physical Education is a required content area that allows students to move their bodies to reduce stress and anxiety, and at the same time strengthens respectful and cooperative skills. SHAPE America has created a [PE and CASEL Crosswalk](#) which identifies standards that are applicable to teaching and/or reinforcing one or more of the five CASEL competencies (SHAPE America, 2019).
- **Comprehensive School Counseling Program (CSCP) Student Standards:** Adopted by the State Board of Education in 2017, the [ODE/American School Counselors Association \(ASCA\) Student Standards](#) identify and describe the knowledge, attitudes and skills that all K-12 students should be able to demonstrate as a result of a CSCP. These standards are used to guide the development, delivery and assessment of direct student service areas in instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling, as defined by the ASCA National Model. The student standards can be applied to any of the three school counseling program domains of academic, career and social-emotional development. When focusing on the social emotional learning domain, the standards are selected and delivered based on the needs of the school, classroom, small group or individual in a manner that is culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate. The ODE/ASCA Student Standards have been cross-walked with CASEL’s competencies. Those implementing school counseling programs use the standards to assess student growth and development, create culturally sustaining strategies and activities and build a program that helps students become career, college and life-ready. Counseling standards already address social and emotional development, embedding SEL principles beyond the classroom as part of the school-system-wide approach we recommend.

## Elevating Cross-Agency Conditions for SEL

ODE has been working with partner agencies to create alignment and coherence in SEL across policies, programs and practices:

- **Teacher Standards & Practices Commission (TSPC):** TSPC is composed of three units: Program Approval, Licensure and Professional Practices. These units oversee the Oregon Administrative Rules from pre-service (standards for educator preparation programs) to in-service (standards for scope of practice and renewal of licenses) to discipline practices as appropriate (standards for competent and ethical educators). SEL is to connect to the Commission’s work in pre-service training and specialization:
  - **Standards for SEL Specialization:** The Commission established the [Social and Emotional Learning Specialization: Program Standards](#) for educator preparation programs to prepare candidates with skills in developing and implementing social emotional learning (Or. Admin R. 584-420-0700). Educators are not required to have a specialization in order to teach SEL, it is simply an enhancement to an existing license. It is important to note that TSPC’s SEL specialization standards reference CASEL’s SEL standards.
  - **Standards for Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) - *Pending*:** In addition, TSPC is currently refining educator preparation standards in order to include SEL. The primary focus of this revision is to ensure that teacher candidates are prepared to enter PreK-12 schools ready to support the social and emotional wellness of their students. TSPC is using CASEL’s framework for this work, and is prepared to support cross-agency alignment between the SBE adoption of SEL and EPP standards.
  
- **Career Connected Learning (CCL):** Social emotional learning is foundational to career development, conferring benefits long beyond graduation. In recognition of how important social and emotional skills are in the workplace and for lifelong learning, ODE and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission have been working with educational, business and community partners across the state. Together, they are creating a CCL Framework that provides an aligned career connected learning system that incorporates SEL constructs as essential employability skills. This CCL system is focused on the four career domains of awareness, exploration, preparation and training. Beyond technical and academic skills, however, career preparation involves the Transformative SEL focal constructs of identity, agency, belonging, collaborative problem-solving and curiosity, which are aligned to CASEL’s five competencies of self-

management, self- and social awareness, responsible decision making, relationship and social skills. School advisers, counselors, and other practitioners want resources to infuse SEL focal constructs in their career development activities. One key area, as noted by the Coalition for Career Development in their report [Condition for Career Readiness in the United States](#) and in a recent [Call to Action by the U.S. Department of Education](#) (Chu, 2022), is the need for states to focus on personalized career and academic planning (Solberg et al., 2022). Individualized student plans like the Personalized Education Plan and Profile (PEPP) provide a vision across a learner’s academic and career journey. This process integrates academic, social-emotional and career readiness, which are the three major comprehensive school counseling program areas identified by ASCA and are aligned with Oregon’s Framework for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs. Integrating SEL-rich employability skills into a robust planning process is known to lead to improved academic and career outcomes for students (Solberg et al., 2022).

- **Early Learning Division’s Social Emotional Standards for age 3 through Kindergarten:** In 2016, the Oregon Department of Education’s Early Learning Division developed [Oregon’s Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines](#). The guidelines include goals or core standards for students that align with the principles and goals of SEL: a) sense of identity and belonging, b) emotional functioning, c) relationships with a trusted adult, d) relationships with other children. These standards also call for adults to take responsibility for nurturing children’s development. The best practice guidelines they offer for implementing the standards include using: a) developmentally appropriate practice, b) culturally responsive practice, c) recognizing adverse childhood experience by using trauma-informed practice, d) family engagement, and e) detailed guidance on working with dual language learners (ODE, 2016a). Oregon’s adoption of comprehensive SEL standards for its K-12 schools can integrate with and extend the work being done by early childhood educators, allowing Oregon students to grow their social and emotional abilities throughout the school system.

### *Summary*

As it develops its SEL standards and framework, Oregon is building on a strong foundation, both in current practices happening across the state and from the resources created by national and other state colleagues. The need for SEL is evident from listening to the voices of Oregon students about their physical and mental health challenges, and social pressures they face in their school environments. With an intentional effort to integrate social emotional learning into all aspects of curriculum and school culture, Oregon will equip students to improve their experiences in the classroom and far beyond.

## Recommended Framework, including Student Standards

### Preliminary Recommendations

The SEL framework should include these three recommended components, described and depicted in Figure 12 below.

- **Framework Component 1 | Guiding Principles:** The principles are the foundational beliefs from which we developed our recommendations.
- **Framework Component 2 | Student Standard Fundamentals:** The constructs & competencies that will be the basis for developing the student-specific SEL standards between September 2022 and September 2023.
  - Implementation Considerations and Opportunities: This anticipates implementation challenges/mitigates unintended consequences.
- **Framework Component 3 | System Standards Fundamentals:** These provide a “high level” overview of what the conditions need to look like in order to support the student standards. For example, what role do adults at school play in creating the conditions for students’ SEL? What professional learning, technical assistance do these adults have? What role does the Oregon Department of Education play? What funding needs exist?
  - Implementation Considerations and Opportunities: This anticipates implementation challenges and mitigates unintended consequences.

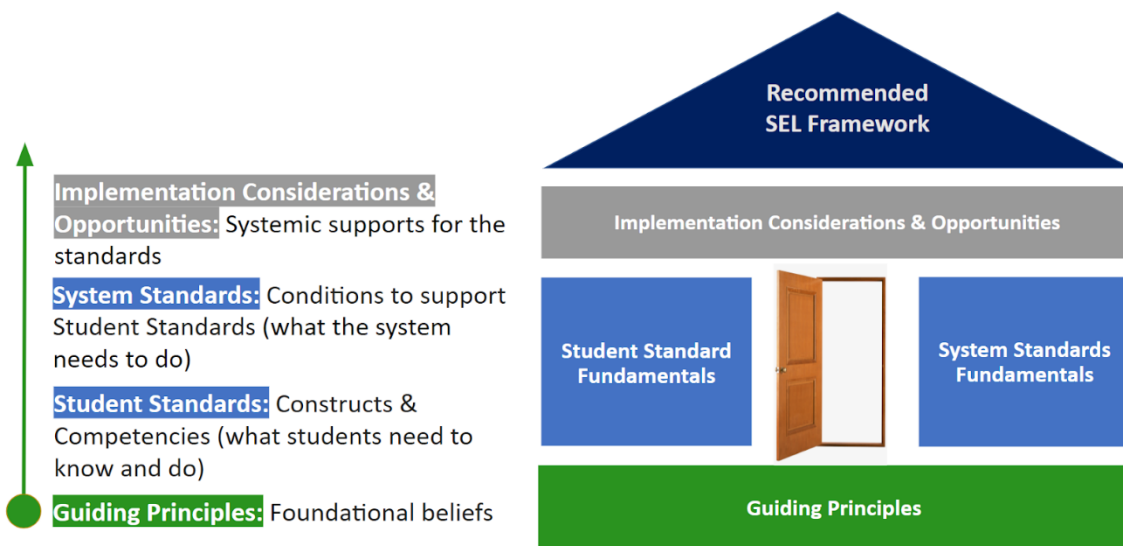


Figure 12 | Recommended SEL Framework

# Framework Component 1 | Guiding Principles

Guiding Principle	Description
<b>Equity-Centered</b>	Ensure all adults and students have access to the support and resources needed to thrive. It is critical to provide time to continuously reflect on the way race, culture, bias, positionality and power dynamics impact how SEL is implemented. This means intentionally creating a climate that values linguistic and cultural ways of knowing and being.
<b>Strengths-Based</b>	Affirm all forms of identity through honoring individual and community backgrounds such as race, culture, and language, and lived experience. A strengths-based approach focuses on individual and systemic protective factors that enhance and promote health and wellbeing rather than emphasizing what is not working or needs to be “fixed.” Using a strengths-based approach doesn’t focus on identifying and remedying problems, or challenges, or attempts to fix kids, because kids are not broken. Instead, it addresses the conditions, systems, and structures that harm students (Venet, 2021). This means showing unconditional positive regard and holding high expectations through scaffolded supports, relationship-building, compassionate communication, and community-building.
<b>Transform Systems through Inclusive Practices</b>	Transform district and school systems through the creation of policies, programs, and practices that promote inclusion for everyone. This means inclusion of culturally sustaining pedagogy and practices that transform school conditions that perpetuate inequities. Particularly, discipline policies should include SEL and Restorative Justice practices to meet student needs, help repair harm, promote healing of community, and collaborate on problem-solving in order to honor a sense of connectedness and belonging within the school community.



Guiding Principle	Description
<b>Trauma-Informed</b>	<p>Recognize that all forms of oppression cause traumatic stress, and that relationships when navigated with care together, can mitigate harm, and maximize opportunities for healing and wellness. Trauma informed principles and practices recognizes behavior as communication and coping, and seeks to understand the why behind behaviors. It also recognizes that individuals are not defined by their traumatic experiences, or their responses to them and are more than their trauma. Social Emotional Learning standards should strive to support students’ dreams, aspirations, and interests.</p>
<b>Developmentally Appropriate</b>	<p>SEL approaches should recognize the developmental progression of students. The <a href="#">National Association for the Education of Young Children</a> describes this concept as follows: “Building on each child’s strengths—and taking care to not harm any aspect of each child’s physical, cognitive, social, or emotional wellbeing—educators design and implement learning environments to help all children achieve their full potential across all domains of development and across all content areas. Developmentally appropriate practice recognizes and supports each individual as a valued member of the learning community. As a result, to be developmentally appropriate, practices must also be culturally, linguistically, and ability appropriate for each child” (Defining Developmentally Appropriate Practice, n.d.). The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group is applying this definition to SEL. Applying a developmentally appropriate lens to SEL does not mean that SEL standards must have grade-level standards. SEL can be developmentally appropriate without that level of detail, and in fact, grade level bands for SEL are in contradiction to developmentally appropriate practices.</p>

Guiding Principle	Description
<p><b>Student, Caregiver &amp; Community Partnership</b></p>	<p>Honor caregivers, families, school staff, and community organizations as full partners in supporting the development and maintenance of healthy school communities. Students are whole people who live in a broader community context, and parents are their first teachers. Students, families, and community organizations have a vested interest in student and school success, and shared decision-making with districts is vital to community health.</p> <p><b>Co-learning &amp; Co-Construction:</b> Students and adults are learning together in a dynamic, ever-changing environment. Students and adults have the potential and opportunity to co-construct an environment that cultivates the conditions where students, families, and school staff can thrive.</p> <p><b>Adult SEL &amp; Lifelong Learning Stance:</b> Recognize that implementation of SEL includes prioritizing adult learning and critical reflection, ongoing support, and resources. The priority must be to first support the SEL development of adults that work with students as they are the ones that create the conditions for learning. To help support adults in modeling and embodying the guiding principles previously recommended, and to reflect on how race, culture, and bias plays a role, it is necessary to provide opportunities for school staff to slow down and engage in continuous reflection.</p>
<p><b>Alignment with other ODE efforts</b></p>	<p>ODE has several assets from which to draw that can inform a framework and standards for SEL. These include but are not limited to those named in the Landscape Scan in this report, and specifically, the Integrated Model of Mental Health and frameworks provided by the culturally-specific Student Success plans that are detailed in our review and analysis below.</p>

## Framework Component 2 | Student Standard Fundamentals

1. The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group recommends that the CASEL Competencies and Transformative SEL Focal Constructs should be braided together as shown in Figure 13.



Figure 13 | Student Standard SEL Competencies & Transformative Focal Constructs

CASEL Student Competencies	Transformative SEL Focal Constructs
<p><b>Self-Awareness</b></p> <p>Understanding culture, thoughts, feelings, and potential, and how these can influence behaviors and beliefs.</p>	<p><b>Identity</b></p> <p>How students view themselves and adults, recognizing that identity is multidimensional and dynamic.</p>
<p><b>Self-Management</b></p> <p>Ability to manage thoughts, emotions, and beliefs.</p>	<p><b>Agency</b></p> <p>Having voice and making decisions about learning and career goals, overcoming</p>

CASEL Student Competencies	Transformative SEL Focal Constructs
	challenges, solving problems collaboratively.
<p><b>Social Awareness</b></p> <p>Ability to be aware of how we understand others, empathize with others, understand how cultural norms influence belonging.</p>	<p><b>Belonging</b></p> <p>Ability to co-create learning spaces, feeling recognized and involved in building relationships and knowledge.</p>
<p><b>Relationship Skills</b></p> <p>Ability to communicate, work with others, manage conflict and disagreements, and solve problems together.</p>	<p><b>Collaborative Problem-Solving</b></p> <p>Capacity to effectively engage in a process where two or more people solve a problem together and share knowledge, skills, and effort to reach a solution.</p>
<p><b>Responsible Decision-Making</b></p> <p>Ability to think critically, analyze impact, support individual and collective wellbeing.</p>	<p><b>Curiosity</b></p> <p>Desire to pursue knowledge and new experiences.</p>

*Implementation Considerations and Opportunities:*

The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group recommends the framework include the implementation guidance below related to student standards development.

1. Standards should be written in both “I can” and “we can” statements to honor cultural backgrounds, collectivist values, and the belief that we are all (including adults) continuously developing our social emotional skills.
2. Standards should be written in such a way that depending on any given context or environment, everyone can show up differently along the progression. All students should be able to access the standards and be met with where they’re at in their SEL concepts and skills. This includes understanding that stress, toxic stress and traumatic stress can impact the development of competencies, and racism and oppression are forms of both toxic stress and trauma.
3. Standards should be written with sufficient flexibility to be useful for all students across all contexts (e.g., when explicitly presented and discussed or when integrated across curricula and school/community processes; when implemented universally with

students and when utilized with expanded methods of support for students with diverse learning or instructional needs, as in MTSS processes).

4. Standards should be written to facilitate dialogue, reflection, and deep understanding among educators of the complexities of SEL development and should inform students', adults', and systems' understanding of what they are doing well and where they need to improve at the individual, classroom, and systems levels.
5. Standards should not be written as a means to decide appropriate behavior or as a means for tracking or excluding students in ways that have historically led to disproportionate outcomes for students.
6. Standards should recognize that other forms of standards have been used to perpetuate and cause harm to students with non-dominant social identities. SEL standards can address the potential to cause harm by including an engagement process where people from diverse racial and cultural groups are involved in the creation of the SEL standards.

### **Framework Component 3 | System Standards Fundamentals**

The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group recommends that the framework include standards for the systemic conditions required for students and adults to grow and develop SEL competencies.

**These system standards are a necessary complement to student standards because SEL is the responsibility of all the adults in the system.** Student standards alone without explicit attention to Adult SEL has the potential to promote a deficit mindset related to student behaviors and abilities. SEL, without being grounded in racial equity, may perpetuate inequities through adults' implicit bias. To design an SEL framework for Oregon, we reviewed the Student Success plans created by multiple historically and currently marginalized communities to understand what conditions these communities identified as essential for an education system that promotes student success for each of these communities. The communities include: African American/Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Latino/a/e/x, LGBTQ2SIA+, English Language Learner student populations and students enrolled in Special Education.

This review found many commonalities across these community-specific plans; the implication is that these commonalities present an obvious starting point from which to design SEL standards for Oregon - because these are developed and named by the communities most impacted by structural racism. The standards recommended below are developed based on this review.

## *Domain 1) School Conditions:*

1. Supporting Educators
  - a. Recruit and retain educators, administrators, and classified staff at rates comparable to the state population of identity groups for which Students Success Plans have been written.
  - b. Provide anti-racist professional learning and technical assistance to educators, administrators, school staff, schools, and districts to create a supportive culture that fosters student success specific to all students.
  - c. Develop professional learning environments for educators of all identity groups to promote their own social and emotional wellness and mental health and wellbeing.
  - d. Increase culturally responsive pedagogy and practice.
2. Educator & Administrator Preparation Programs:
  - a. Include training on supporting Transformative Social Emotional Learning in classrooms and schools.
  - b. Result in educators who understand both the Essential Understandings related to tribes in Oregon and, more broadly, culturally sustaining approaches to supporting social, emotional, and academic needs.
  - c. Integrate experiences of diverse racial, ethnic, sexual orientation and gender minorities into pedagogy & model what intersectional inclusion is and trauma-informed care looks like in all classrooms.
3. Positive Identity & Development
  - a. Curriculum is culturally responsive and represents student groups (in alignment with [HB 2023](#)).
  - b. Create student access to project-based, hands-on learning experiences through which their identity is affirmed and valued.
  - c. Collect accurate data from students in identity groups, and involve youth in the interpretation of these data and results.
  - d. Promote connections to culturally responsive mental and behavioral health.
  - e. Develop student voice networks to regularly assess school climate data and develop recommendations to survey findings to build inclusive and safe school environments.
  - f. Provide clear protocols to educators and school staff for knowing, learning and using students' affirmed names and pronouns in the school information system and in the school setting.
4. School Culture

- a. Create a welcoming school culture for all student identity groups.
- b. Administer annual school climate surveys to students, school staff, and families.
- c. Reduce suspensions, expulsions, and pushout incidents.
- d. Implement asset-based, developmentally appropriate discipline and restorative justice practices.
- e. Fund schools to create time and space for educators and students to build relationships and trust.

*Domain 2) Community Collaboration Between Families, Students, Schools, and Districts:*

1. Engage the community in leadership and decision-making for systems and policy change.
2. Provide culturally specific community-based organizations wrap-around services and supports.
3. Identify and advocate for culturally responsive approaches through collaboration between districts, tribes, and cultural organizations.
4. Increase and make available culturally-specific information supports and services to newly-arrived immigrants regarding social, emotional, cultural and educational needs at family level.

*Domain 3) State Role in Creating the Conditions for Local Implementation:*

1. Build and sustain meaningful relationships to encourage tribal education sovereignty with regular consultation and communication.
2. Address adverse childhood experiences by developing protective factors for positive academic and health outcomes by working together as community partners, tribes, and school districts.
3. Strengthen ODE's capacity and organizational infrastructure to implement the student success plans.
4. Invest in culturally specific programs to mitigate historical limitations in access to funding.
5. Fund ODE to develop and share case studies.
6. ODE should create guidance to support the student standards that:
  - a. Considers how classroom and school conditions impact the SEL development, academic learning, and mental health and wellbeing of students.
  - b. Includes guidance on ways to mitigate how white dominant culture norms of behaviors can show up in the standards and impact the classroom environment.

7. ODE should create guidance that supports the assessment and evaluation for the continuous improvement of systemic SEL implementation that:
  - a. Is culturally informed and appropriate, honoring the voices and values of traditionally underserved people.
  - b. Can identify direct supports for individual students and specific student groups.
  - c. Identifies where schools and districts are successful and need additional support/resources.
  - d. Doesn't perpetuate harm/trauma/racism/systems of oppression and doesn't rank/sort students.
  - e. Meaningfully involves youth and families in the development of assessment and evaluation strategies, and the interpretation and contextualization of data and findings.

### *Implementation Considerations and Opportunities:*

1. The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group recommends additional engagement focused on how to support the implementation of a comprehensive and inclusive vision of SEL, including:
  - a. Continue working with the Student Success Plan advisors to build alignment with the plans and when appropriate engage Student Success Plan advisory committees.
  - b. Coordinate with the Early Learning Division (ELD/DELC) to align the Kindergarten Guidelines that include SEL, especially those that cross over from early learning to K-12.
  - c. In partnership, engage professional associations representing school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, educators, administrators, and classified staff to provide feedback on the standards and identify implementation needs.
  - d. Coordinate with the Office of the Director, Office of Teaching Learning and Assessment, Office of Indian Education, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, Office of Enhancing Student Opportunities, and Office of Education Innovation and Improvement to align to district needs related to SEL and mental health.  
*(Context: The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group acknowledges that many communities in Oregon have expressed their hopes and needs for social emotional learning and mental health promotion in schools. In this first phase, we drew from the many sources listed in depth throughout this report. We also elevated what students*



*have said they want and need from the LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan engagement, the Oregon Health Authority Healthy Teens Survey, and Oregon Student Voice's student-driven State of Our Schools report. The advisory group has also begun building relationships with other community organizations and professional associations whose input and partnership is essential to the continued integration of social and emotional learning and mental health promotion in Oregon. These conversations included meeting with Student Success Advisors and connecting existing efforts, coordinating with counselor, social worker, school psychologist and educator professional associations, and connecting with community organizations and coalitions, including Oregon Student Voice that share an interest in supporting students' social and emotional learning.)*

2. The Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group recommends the framework include the implementation guidance below:
  - a. ODE should be provided with resources, capacity, and time to support districts and ESDs with training and tools to support the professional learning of educators, administrators and school staff.
  - b. Implementing SEL requires trained adult professionals who have deep knowledge and skills around Social Emotional Learning. Districts should consider whether the ratios of students to trained staff are adequate to meet the needs of their students.
3. To support implementation, the Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group recommends that ODE encourage the Quality Education Commission (QEC) to integrate SEL implementation into cost modeling when it updates the Quality Education Model (QEM) and request regular reports at its public meetings from the QEC regarding updates to the QEM.

*(Context: The QEM defines the budget number required to fully fund K-12 education. The legislature uses this number as a baseline from which to make budget decisions, so while this may seem like a technocratic recommendation, this is needed in order to create the conditions for SEL implementation. Put simply, implementation of all of these recommendations will require resources. Not naming and providing these resources will be a barrier to high-quality implementation of all recommendations herein. SBE and ODE need to understand how much SEL implementation within the broader scope of Integrated Model of Mental Health implementation and health and mental health promotion will cost so that policymakers and education stakeholders are informed about what the immediate and long-term needs are.)*

## Conclusion

Students learn within an ecosystem that is shaped by the adults that teach and support them and who establish the cultures of their learning environment. SEL is not an additional subject area but rather an approach that infuses the school environment with the recognition that all learning is social and emotional.

Our work of gathering recommendations for SEL in Oregon schools led us to an SEL Framework of an image of a house that rests on two pillars: standards for students along with standards for their educational system. The student standards intentionally braid the five CASEL competencies with the transformative focal constructs; these student standards cannot be seen as separate from the system standards because SEL is the practice of “transforming inequitable settings and systems” (Jaegers, 2021).

The recommended SEL Framework is about transforming the system through policy and practice so both students and adults are affirmed for their unique *identities*, so both students and adults feel a sense of *agency* and *belonging* in their school and district, and so both students and adults’ *curiosity* and capacity for *collaborative problem-solving* are nurtured. When SEL is fully integrated throughout the school system, we will see students and adults enhance their own social and emotional wellbeing and benefit from a more caring and inclusive environment that has the potential to transform teaching and learning across Oregon schools.

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## Appendix A – Phase 1 SEL Advisory Group Members

Name	Organization
Leticia Aguilar	Adelante Mujeres
Todd Bloomquist	Grants Pass SD
Jill Bryant	Portland Public Schools
Holly Dalton	Willamette ESD
Jim Hanson	Portland Public Schools/Oregon School Psychologist Association
Daniel Gallo	Lane ESD
Hailey Hardcastle	University of Oregon Student, Policy Advocate
Angela Healow	Lane ESD
Deirdre Hon	University of Portland
Jose Marquez	Ontario SD
Melissa McCoy	Latino Network
Soobin Oh	Children's Institute/Early Learning
Fran Pearson	Oregon Health Authority
Rebecca Pierce	Klamath Falls City SD-School Counseling lead
Annie Schlegel	North Clackamas SD/Oregon School Social Worker Association
Kate Shively	Canby SD/Oregon School Counselor Association
Andrea Shunk	Oregon Education Association
Jen Susuki	Malheur ESD
Chelsie Vuckovich	Sherwood SD
Jackson Weinberg	Oregon Student Voice
Mallory Ensing	Oregon Student Voice

## Appendix B - Facilitators & Consultants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Role</b>
Melinda Avila	Early Learning Division	Consultant
Pooja Bhatt	Contractor, Region 16 Comprehensive Center	Facilitator
Grace Bullock	ODE	Consultant
Aimee Craig	Contractor, Region 16 Comprehensive Center	Facilitator
Mona Halcomb	ODE	Consultant until January 2022
Vanessa Martinez	ODE	Facilitator
Alexa Pearson	ODE	Facilitator
Luz Rivera	ODE	Facilitator
Kristin Rush	Teacher Standards and Practices Commission	Consultant
Carmen Xiomara Urbina	ODE	Consultant
Beth Wigham	ODE	Facilitator