Strengthening Social, Emotional and Culturally Sustaining Teaching Practices

A Framework for Oregon Educator Preparation
Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, Winter 2022

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FOREWORD

With drastic changes made to their education, social and home lives, children, adolescents, and educators will find themselves struggling with stressors they've never faced. Recent national surveys of young people have shown alarming increases in the prevalence of certain mental health challenges. In 2019 alone, one in three high school students and half of female students reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, an overall increase of 40% from 2009. Given the increased mental health needs, rise in school violence incidents (US News, 2021), and high prevalence of youth suicide (CDC, 2022), Oregon has found itself with a unique opportunity to redesign schools with teacher and student social and emotional wellbeing at the forefront. The Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC), as well as all of those who advised in the creation of this document, envision a system where schools are trauma-sensitive, culturally responsive and sustaining, and anchored in equitable anti-racist, asset focused and identity-affirming practices.

Teachers play a significant role in helping create the kind of classroom environment that promotes social-emotional learning (SEL) and positive social-emotional development among students through integration of SEL curricula and building safe and supportive learning environments. However, as one of the most stressful occupations, teachers in PreK-12 settings are vulnerable to poor social-emotional outcomes resulting from educator burnout, lack of resources to support training and professional development, and limited resources to support the social-emotional needs of students in their classrooms. As we've learned nationally during the COVID-19 pandemic, schools are critical in our communities to supporting children and their families. Teachers need to be prepared to manage daily stressors within contemporary school settings that directly impact their well-being and the social-emotional development of students.

We believe that through SEL teaching practices, a school can be a place that embraces learning and growth through vulnerability and affirming practices that support all youth AND educators in ways that are inclusive of people of color, LGBTQ2SIA+ individuals, people with disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse youth and families, and individuals who have otherwise experienced school as a place that was not safe to express their full identity. We believe that building safe and supportive schools, including improving climate, culture and connectedness, visibility, mental health, and fostering resiliency can only be achieved when everyone feels like they belong. Teachers are integral to the cultivation of SEL programs and practices in schools and classrooms, and their own social-emotional competence and well-being strongly influence that of their students.

In Oregon, we have 16 high quality educator preparation providers (EPPs), each with its own strength, vision, and overall definition of what it means to be a competent and capable PreK-12 educator. Some programs emphasize social justice, others focus on developing and sustaining healthy relationships, but all of them are nationally accredited and prepare educators to thrive in

Oregon PreK-12 schools. The framework that you see outlined below is meant to be just that- a frame on which each EPP is able to add their unique methodology, programming and philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

Students' SEL skills and academic skills increase when schools promote students' social and emotional competence (Durlak et al., 2011). Extensive research evidence demonstrates that SEL skills can be taught and measured. Particularly, they can improve students' academic performance, prosocial behaviors, and health-related behaviors and can reduce challenging behaviors in the classroom. For example, a meta-analysis from 2011 that looked across 213 studies found that:

- Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) interventions that address self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, increased students' academic performance by 11 percentile points, compared to students who did not participate.
- Students participating in SEL programs showed improved classroom behavior, an increased ability to manage stress and depression, and better attitudes about themselves, others, and school (Durlak et al., 2011).

Additionally, a longitudinal study by Hawkins et al. (2008) found that students who participated in a school-based SEL program during the elementary grades, fifteen years later -as young adults- attained higher educational levels, and were more likely to be employed. According to a Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) report highlighting the benefits of an SEL program (Durlak & Mahoney, 2019), adding an SEL program contributes to 27% more students showing improvement in their academic performance at the end of the program and 24% more students having social behaviors and lower levels of distress.

In addition to the instruction of SEL programs, an SEL-focused classroom and school also includes a supportive climate and the meaningful and intentional integration of SEL with the academic curriculum and in instruction. Therefore, it is only fitting that "teachers are the engine that drives" (Schonert-Reichl, 2017, p. 138) SEL practices at school. This requires that teachers are supported in the development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach social and emotional skills and create supportive learning environments. Adults with strong SEL skills have an increased ability to develop relationships and work with students who exhibit challenging behaviors. They are more likely to stay in the profession of education, have increased emotion regulation skills, and have more positive relationships (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Background

Students, caregivers, and educators in Oregon, and the rest of the United States, are entering schools with increasingly diverse and complex needs. These needs have been exacerbated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a recent survey conducted by the National

Education Association, 55% of educators plan on leaving the profession earlier than they anticipated, as a result of burn-out and increases in job expectations. The results are higher for members who are from BIPOC communities (62% of Black educators and 59% of Hispanic/Latino educators), (NEA News, 2022).

One of the most effective ways to address stress and burn-out is to provide comprehensive adult social-emotional training to all educators that addresses the daily challenges they are faced with. Comprehensive social and emotional learning skills provide critical tools for success in life and help when one is presented with challenges. These skills include self-management, self-awareness, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. When adults develop their own social-emotional skills, they are able to interact more positively with colleagues, students, and families, creating a positive school climate where staff and students can thrive. When adults are at their "best selves", they are more likely to experience greater job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and less burn-out. (Brackett, 2019)

Having a deep understanding of SEL allows educators to create environments that increase academic learning, belonging, and well-being. It is imperative that all educators in Oregon share this common knowledge and integrate social and emotional skills with academic instruction across the school day.

OVERVIEW
Definition
For the purpose of this guidance, the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) defines social and emotional learning (SEL) as an integral part of education and human development. CASEL 2020 states that 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.

SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic and meaningful 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 (Based on CASEL, 2020).

Vision
TSPC, in partnership with Oregon's Educator Preparation Programs, envisions a state in which all preservice educators graduate prepared to serve their students, classrooms and school community as authentic, self-aware, caring and engaged life-long learners who collaborate to achieve their goals and contribute to more inclusive, positive, just and equitable systems

(modified from CASEL, 2020). These systems will be culturally responsive, trauma-informed and foster the unique identities of the educators and students within them.

Guiding Principles
1. Asset-Framing Mindset
    a. Universal
    b. Rooted in Climate & Culture Development
    c. Integrated
2. Equity
    a. Understanding Implicit Bias In Self And Others
    b. Recognizing Systemic (In)Equities
    c. Leading With Empathy
    d. Self-Reflection
3. Relationships & Community
    a. Inclusive
    b. Caring
    c. Growth-Promoting
    d. Reciprocal & Mutual
4. Transformational Growth
    a. Collaborative
    b. Intentional
    c. Consistent
    d. Continuous

Goals
The overarching goal of this educator SEL framework is to provide recommendations for educator preparation programs to embed SEL competencies throughout their programs with the desired outcomes of:
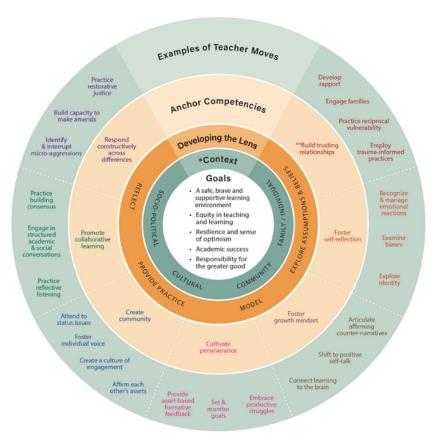1. Creating opportunities to recognize, reflect on, and develop one's own identity as an educator and allow educators to have agency over cultivating that identity
2. Cultivating emotional resilience to remain an effective and caring educator in the face of adversity
3. Modeling a safe, courageous and supportive learning and teaching environment where personal growth and self reflection occur out of vulnerability
4. Classrooms as natural environments to examine and disrupt systemic inequities by creating space where collaborative, equitable, and just learning can occur

FRAMEWORK
The Teacher Standards and Practices Commission supports the Educator Preparation Providers that train these teachers to enter school systems. With two diverse and complicated systems working in parallel, we know that a framework for social and emotional learning that bridges

these two systems will be critical for the universal integration of SEL across settings. Given that most districts and ESDs in Oregon, as well as the Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines (2016) align their SEL practices and programming with the CASEL framework, it is important that our educator SEL framework align with CASEL as well.

While there are many organizing frameworks for SEL, each outlining several components that influence SEL, each framework identifies similar student outcomes with less focus on the role of educators in promoting such competencies and their development. It is important to note that these frameworks share three distinct and interrelated dimensions that include the learning context, students' SEL, and teachers' SEL. Any discussion of SEL should include an integration of all three and address how teacher SEL can contribute to the fidelity of SEL implementation in the classroom.   We see the implementation of those competency areas lying foundationally within the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child's Social, Emotional and Cultural Competencies (CRTWC) Framework (https://crtwc.org/; see also Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020). As such, we see Oregon as supporting both frameworks simultaneously: CASEL for supporting competency development of K-12 students and the Social, Emotional and Cultural Competencies Framework, created by the CRTWC, for enhancing an educator's own competencies and implementing SEL practices within the classroom.
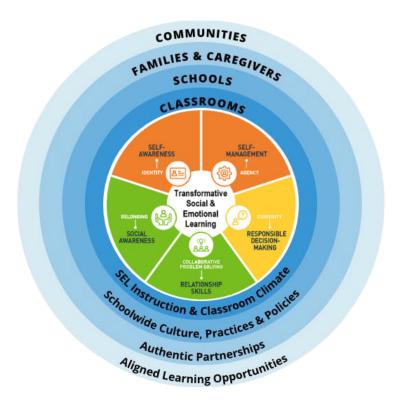

*Within the context of historic, structural racism, this Framework supports a proactive anti-racist and anti-marginalization stance.
**Building trusting relationships is foundational to the development of all anchor competencies.

Competencies

TSPC recognizes that CASEL is the organization that initially established the field of social and emotional learning and thus advocates for the teaching and modeling of social, emotional and academic skills to students with educator wellness serving as an unseen foundation of student development. In Oregon schools and districts, educators are using strategies and teaching from curriculum that align to CASEL's framework for social and emotional learning. As such, it follows logic for TSPC and Oregon educator preparation programs to adopt CASEL's 5 competency areas in ways that align with the social and emotional skills of the students

- Self-Awareness: The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.
- Self-Management: The abilities to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.
- Social Awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.
- Relationship Skills: The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.
- Responsible Decision-Making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.

TSPC recognizes that the needs of educators vary from the needs of students which CASEL was designed to address. The Competency areas are organized into knowledge, skills and attitudes that reflect the unique needs of educators as a whole and specifically Oregon educators. For additional conceptual mapping, please refer to the [Personal SEL Reflection tool](#) from CASEL (CASEL, 2021).

In CASEL's model, the concentric circles around the competencies outline education-specific systems that impact the social and emotional development of students and identify key areas where relationships, partnerships and engagement can be enhanced. Those circles are classrooms, schools, families & caregivers and communities. While this model is comprehensive from a student standpoint, it does not fully encompass the scope of influence that an educator has to promote equity or describe the factors that may influence an educator's ability to engage and model SEL competencies fully. In order to address the educator's role in the development of student SEL skills, the adoption of the CASEL framework was coupled with the Social, Emotional, and Cultural Competencies Framework from the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020).

Focal Constructs

The lens describes the habits and behaviors that educators need to continually practice to develop and implement a social and emotional focus in their everyday decision making (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020). It is important that pre-service educators have the opportunity to vulnerably recognize and grow their own identities as educators through the scaffolding of a supportive and SEL-embedded educator preparation program. The lenses with which TSPC proposes educators develop their own identity, as identified by CASEL's Transformative SEL (Jagers, et al 2021) are:

- Examine Identity: Self-reflection and self-respect evolved from multifaceted personal and social group statuses.
- Foster Agency: Hope and self-direction that impacts positively on psychological and social reality.
- Cultivate Belonging: Enhancing self-worth by co-constructing an equitable, thriving local community through connectedness and trust.
- Problem-Solve Collaboratively: A critical feature in the efforts to pursue equity and excellence that helps realize the collective rights and responsibilities of full citizenship in local, national and global community contexts.
- Stimulate Curiosity: Informed decision making based on open-minded investigation, self-development and careful social analysis that surfaces and curates information about oneself in relation to others.

Context

TSPC envisions an educator's teaching context to be an interconnected web of systems which coordinate to shape learning, development and experiences. It is critical for educators to recognize how these systems work together and how they impact individuals differently. By integrating SEL throughout an educator's scope of influence, the conditions are created to lift partner voice, enhance educator and student agency, and establish supportive classroom and school climates to promote learning (based on CASEL, 2020). The context is essential to helping educators realize their commitment to culturally responsive pedagogy and racial equity and to recognize what it looks like in practice (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020). The following contexts, as well as the relationships that form between and among them, can be supported or enhanced with SEL strategies:

- District Priorities and Adequate Training
- Experience & Identity
- Classrooms & Schools
- Family Arrangements & Caregivers
- Communities & Neighborhoods
- Tribal Communities

Structures

Sometimes, there are features outside of an educator's direct scope of influence that can greatly impact an educator's ability to utilize SEL as a relationship tool and equity lever. These factors require ongoing work by educators and other education advocates and typically occur outside of the educator's primary context. At TSPC we are labeling these features as "structures" that are socio-political, systemic or otherwise out of an educator's direct ability to control on a day-to-day basis. Some identified structures are:

- Current Political Climate
- Geographical Context (Frontier, Rural, Suburban, Urban)
- Adequate Educator Training
- Historic and Contemporary Systemic Inequities
- Racism, Biases and Microaggressions
- Workforce Shortages and Turnover
- Leadership
- Current Events
- Unexpected Life Events or Family Situations
- Laws and Policies
- District Expectations
- Climate Crisis/Change

STANDARDS

The standards below are based on the CASEL framework competencies including focal constructs. It should be acknowledged that these standards have a long history of being implemented in a compliance-focused way that did not always consider the complexity and depth of identity that students and educators are bringing into schools and districts. However, we believe that the evidence base behind these standards should not be disregarded and should, instead, be reflected upon with an equity lens, considering the context and structures impacting them.

EPPs, in implementing these five standards, should prioritize the skills and abilities identified within each competency that they believe are the most critical for preparing educators to enter the Oregon PreK-12 school system. Each EPP will have their own take on these competencies and that is what makes Oregon educator preparation unique. The critical feature of these standards is how they are implemented in classrooms and schools.

Standard 1: Self-Awareness

Using a lens of examining personal identity, the EPP will ensure that faculty, staff and candidates
    a) Recognize and examine personal, cultural and linguistic assets and other social markers that may influence identity development and emotion regulation as it relates to one's culture, family of origin, and historical experiences
    b) Recognize unexamined prejudices and biases through personal reflection by linking feelings, values and thoughts of one's identity as an educator including their relationship as an educator on larger systems (e.g. classroom, school, community)
    c) Examine self-efficacy in order to develop professional identity and dispositions which enhance one's capacity to execute behaviors that demonstrate respect for different people, places and contexts

Standard 2: Self-Management

Using a lens of fostering agency, the EPP will ensure that faculty, staff and candidates
    a) Demonstrate competence in self-regulation strategies including identifying personal and professional stressors, and having the discipline to recognize and express emotions appropriately in a professional setting
    b) Continuously examine their own practice, sense of agency, initiative, and utilization of a growth mindset to explore areas of professional development
    c) Utilize planning and organizational skills to set and achieve personal, professional and collective goals and proactively seek help from key partners to achieve those goals

Standard 3: Social-Awareness

Using a lens of cultivating belonging, the EPP will ensure that faculty, staff and candidates
  a) Acknowledge the value in others' perspectives including their assets and strengths
  b) Identify opportunities to express gratitude and model empathy in situationally appropriate ways that promote a healthy understanding of emotions and feelings within shared environments
  c) Understand the influence that organizations, systems and social norms, including those that are historically oppressive or unjust, have on attitudes, beliefs and behavior

Standard 4: Relationship Skills

Using a lens of collaborative problem-solving, the EPP will ensure that faculty, staff and candidates
  a) Develop and foster positive professional relationships while recognizing the importance of work-life harmony and the impact of compassion fatigue on burnout and support-seeking behaviors
  b) Communicate effectively, resolve conflicts constructively and demonstrate group leadership when appropriate
  c) Use available power and privilege to elevate and amplify the voices of those who have been historically underserved by the education system by acknowledging and recognizing multiple ways of being and knowing

Standard 5: Responsible Decision-Making

Using a lens of stimulating curiosity, the EPP will ensure that faculty, staff and candidates
  a) Analyze available information, data and facts in order to find reasonable and feasible solutions to personal and social problems
  b) Utilize critical thinking skills in order to anticipate and evaluate the consequences of actions and attitudes, including implications for school and community outcomes
  c) Identify their scope of influence and impact by reflecting on their own role as an agent of change to promote personal and community well-being

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