

Social & Emotional Learning: Looking Back, Aiming Forward

A LANDSCAPE SCAN

SUPPORTED BY **NoVo Foundation**
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ORIGINAL RESEARCH IN APRIL 2017 | UPDATED AUGUST 2017

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1 | Executive summary

We created this deck to inform efforts in the education sector to spread high-quality, integrated SEL to all schools in the U.S.

Why this deck

Practitioners, policymakers, families and students are increasingly asking for SEL to be a core part of the education experience in American schools. **We offer this resource to help funders and others in the education sector make decisions to meet this demand by scaling, deepening and integrating SEL for all students.**

We originally developed this landscape scan in April 2017 for the NoVo Foundation to support its SEL investments and adapted the scan in August 2017 as a public resource.

Who we are

NoVo Foundation
create. change.

NoVo Foundation works to build a more just and balanced world. NoVo is one of the largest private foundations in the world to support initiatives focused explicitly on girls and women. It also works to advance social and emotional learning, support indigenous communities in North America, and promote local living economies. Across all of its grantmaking, NoVo supports the development of capacities in people—individually and collectively—to help create a world based on mutual respect, collaboration and love.

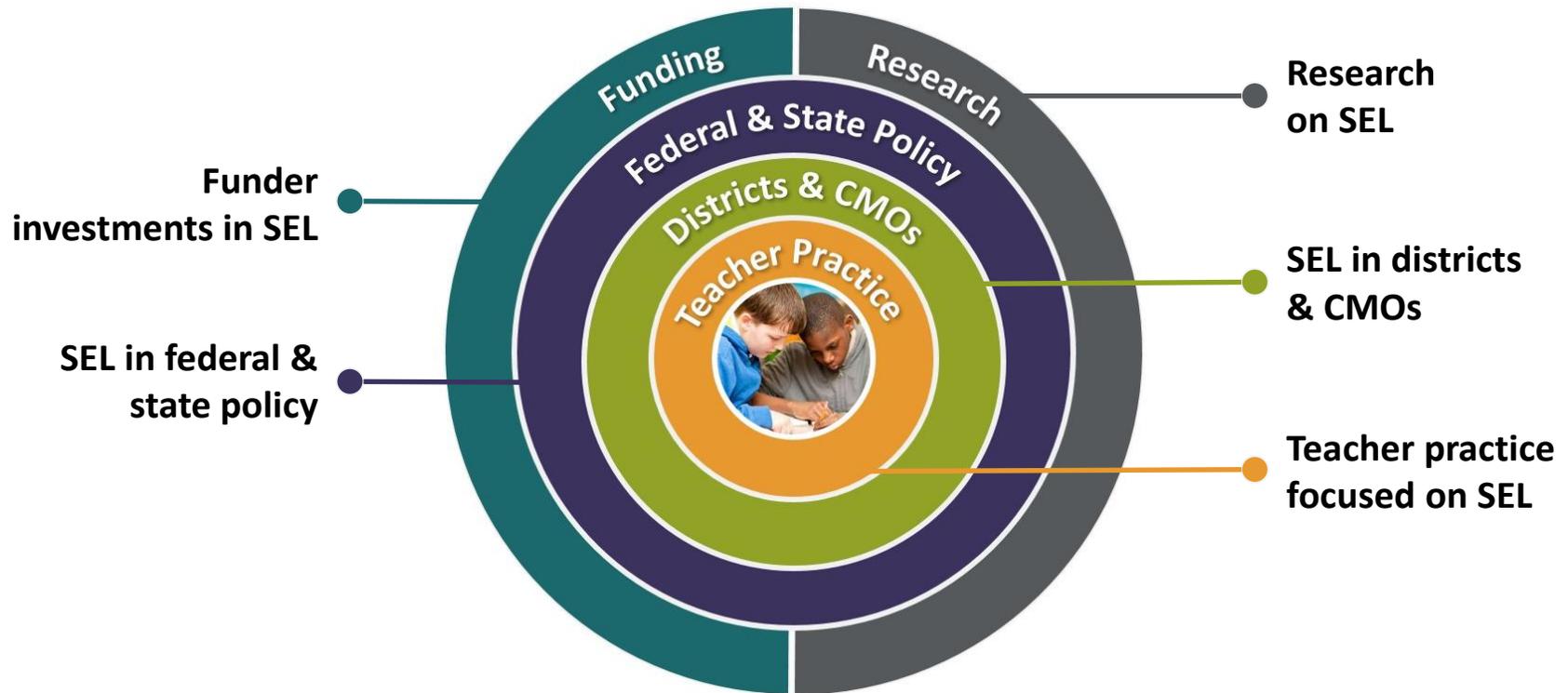
Education First is a seasoned team of trusted advisors to the leaders responsible for delivering what many Americans want most: public education that effectively prepares all students for success in college, careers and a world of constant change. We devote our energy and expertise to improving opportunities for all children, especially low income students and students of color.



educationfirst
experience | quality | results

We conducted research in five broad areas to survey the SEL field and highlight opportunities for the education sector to build on SEL's momentum into the future

Our research framework



Note: NoVo Foundation's investments focus on high-quality SEL implementation in school systems and classrooms across the country. In keeping with NoVo's priorities, we devoted comparatively more time to investigating the areas in this framework that are closer "to the ground"—SEL in districts & CMOs and teacher practice focused on SEL. While this deck covers all five areas, we also direct readers to other resources wherever possible.

Our research elevates three themes where the SEL field has made progress to date, but still has room to grow



Equity as “North Star”

There is growing understanding in the field that SEL must incorporate an equity lens. But the field has much work to do to understand **what it means to effectively integrate equity with SEL, approach SEL from an asset-based perspective and meet the needs of the diverse students our education system serves**, particularly low-income students and students of color. Stakeholders at all levels—in statehouses, research labs, district/CMO central offices, schools and classrooms—must prioritize this work.



Power of collaboration

The field has experimented with different models of collaboration, such as district/CMO networks, researcher working groups and teacher communities of practice. Those who have participated in these models continue to value **purposeful collaboration**. The field can take steps to deepen this shared learning and create new opportunities to connect individuals in different roles to solve common problems.



Innovation in the service of practice

The growing interest in SEL nationally has spurred much innovation. For example, researchers are creating new measures to assess SEL skills, district leaders are trying new supports to help schools implement SEL with quality, and teachers are modifying their teaching practice to incorporate SEL. What connects these forms of innovation is a **strong and consistent focus on SEL practice in the classroom**.

Our recommendations are:



Teacher practice focused on SEL

- Create opportunities for teachers to **share best practices** and **develop new solutions** to classroom challenges
- Cultivate **teacher leadership** to promote SEL and advance high-quality practice
- Support **clear frameworks and tools** to help teachers **embed SEL into instruction**
- Help schools address **adult SEL skills** in their local theory of action for SEL
- Build practitioner **capacity to use new SEL measures and data** for improvement



SEL in districts & CMOs

- Foster **collaboration** among districts and CMOs with a **focus on teacher practice**
- Offer guidance on how to **select and use the right SEL measures** to drive change
- Help districts and CMOs adopt a **continuous improvement agenda**
- Codify and share **lessons learned from highly innovative districts and CMOs**



SEL in federal & state policy

- Connect **state/district leaders and teachers** to **develop and improve policies**
- Promote **partnerships** between teacher prep programs, districts and SEL experts
- Support research **to study the effectiveness of new policies**



Research on SEL

- Continue growing **knowledge base** on **how children and youth build SEL skills**
- Investigate what it takes for SEL to be effective at the **high school level**
- Seed and sustain **research-practice partnerships** to tackle problems of practice
- Increase **practitioner participation** in the development of **SEL measures**



Funder investments in SEL

- Clarify (and act on) the **throughline** from investments to **impact on practice and better outcomes for students**
- Consider different forms of **funder collaboration** to pursue common goals

2 | Background & methodology

We created this deck to inform efforts in the education sector to spread high-quality, integrated SEL to all schools in the U.S.

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We conducted desk research and interviewed key leaders in the SEL field to shape our findings and recommendations

Research methodology

Discovery (February 2017)

Preliminary research

Drew on **Education First's work in SEL** to identify key themes and lessons to explore in a landscape scan. This work includes our ongoing support of districts in the [Collaborating Districts Initiative](#) on behalf of the NoVo Foundation, our experiences managing the [NoVo SEL Innovation Fund](#) and our SEL publications, such as [Social and Emotional Learning: Why Students Need It. What Districts Are Doing About It.](#)

In-depth research (February – March 2017)

Interviews*

Conducted phone interviews with **16 leaders in the SEL field**, including funders, district and CMO leaders, and organizations that provide SEL-focused professional development to teachers and school leaders.

Desk research

Reviewed **publicly-available reports, scholarly articles and other materials** to complement the information provided by interviewees and fill any gaps in our knowledge of the SEL field.

Final analysis and reporting (April/July 2017)

Analysis of findings and implications for the SEL field

Analyzed the **state of the SEL field** and developed **recommendations** informed by our research findings across SEL policy, practice and research.

We created an earlier version of this landscape scan for the NoVo Foundation. We are grateful for their support.

Over the next several sections, we share findings to deepen the field's understanding of SEL policy, research and practice and spur reflection on the future direction of SEL



State of the SEL field

Key insights to inform the field's thinking and action on SEL

Recommendations to build on SEL's progress to date

Eight priorities in the SEL field to build knowledge and advance practice, which emerged from our research and interviews

Salient trends and opportunities for SEL in teacher practice, districts & CMOs, federal & state policy, and funder investments that hold promise for future support and investment

Recommendations for grantmakers and other decision-makers to help continue building the SEL field, with a focus on **equity, collaboration** and an **orientation toward practice**

Note: In this deck, we refer to the “SEL field” to indicate the broad collection of individuals and organizations working on issues related to SEL in the U.S. K-12 public education system, which includes research, policy and practice activities at all levels of this system (e.g., classrooms, schools, districts and CMOs, communities).

3 | State of the SEL field

In this section, we examine eight priorities in the SEL field to fill knowledge gaps and advance high-quality practice

Major priorities in the SEL field as identified by experts*



Creating **coherence** across SEL frameworks and terminologies

Ensuring **high-quality SEL implementation**



Integrating **equity** and **culturally responsive practices** into SEL

Aligning **in-school** and **out-of-school** SEL efforts



Exploring the potential of **personalized learning models** to build SEL skills

Measuring SEL skills through **valid and reliable assessments**



Determining the **impact of SEL interventions** for different **students** in diverse **contexts**

Helping **networks** of school systems **learn and improve**



Several organizations are trying to create coherence across SEL frameworks and terminologies



State of the field:

There are multiple frameworks that often use different terms or similar terms with different meanings for SEL competencies, all of which is leading to **confusion** among practitioners, policymakers and other stakeholders.¹

Gap to be addressed:

The SEL field needs **“conceptual clarity”** that establishes **clear definitions** and creates **alignment where possible** across areas relevant to SEL, such as trauma, resilience, youth development, PBIS, restorative practices, character education and others.²

Leader working to fill this gap:

National Commission on Social, Emotional & Academic Development at the Aspen Institute is bringing together researchers, practitioners and policymakers to develop a “roadmap” that recommends ways to create a K-12 education system that supports the whole student.³

Some frameworks that address SEL

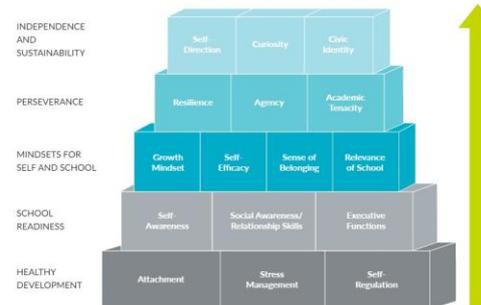
CASEL’s 5 Core Competencies



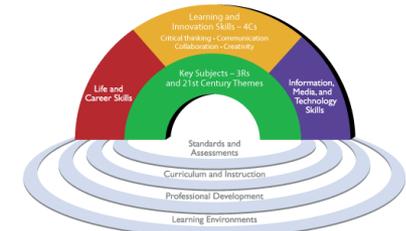
UChicago Consortium on School Research’s Foundations for Young Adult Success



Turnaround for Children’s Building Blocks for Learning



P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning



School systems, leaders and teachers are pursuing high-quality SEL implementation



Approaches to integrating SEL instruction and academics

State of the field:

Frameworks like CASEL's and UChicago Consortium on School Research's provide a foundation for aligning instruction with SEL.

Gap to be addressed:

The field needs new knowledge about how to **strengthen** student SEL skills, how to **sequence** their implementation, what accounts for **mastery**, and how to integrate SEL into **academic development and pedagogy**, among other areas.¹

Leader working to fill this gap:

Turnaround for Children's work aims to inform how the field prioritizes, sequences and develops SEL skills in students.

Teacher professional development (PD)

State of the field:

There is little evidence that current forms of PD improve teacher practice.² In the case of SEL, the field needs to **learn more about how to teach SEL—and how to support teachers in doing it well.**³

Gap to be addressed:

In addition to SEL instructional tools, teachers need **high-quality PD opportunities, especially to cultivate their own adult SEL skills.**

Leader working to fill this gap:

FuelEd uses an innovative model to help teachers develop knowledge about relationship science, build relationships-building skills and grow their self-awareness.

Development for school and district leaders

State of the field:

To date, few researchers have explored what school and district leaders can and should do to create the **enabling conditions for successful SEL implementation.**⁴

Gap to be addressed:

School leaders in particular need more guidance and support, including on **how to use SEL data** to guide school-wide priorities.

Leader working to fill this gap:

The **Collaborating Districts Initiative** is generating lessons and practical guidance for leaders at different levels to integrate SEL throughout their district.⁵

Researchers and practitioners seek to integrate equity and culturally responsive practices into SEL more consistently



State of the field:

Much of the research and practice that have guided the development of the SEL field have **not consistently applied a lens of equity, diversity and cultural responsiveness**. But in recent years, there is greater awareness that the field must address the unique needs of students from non-Western cultures.¹

Some scholars suggest that some current SEL programs take a one-size-fits-all approach that does not consider school context, which can limit the support for highest-need students.²

*“SEL has been so tepid about addressing injustices and inequity. But now there **needs to be a different kind of conversation.**”*

—SEL thought leader at CASEL’s 2017 Cross-District Convening in Oakland, California

Gap to be addressed:

The SEL field may fill this gap by:

- Examining **how culture, race, and other factors** affect the “update” of interventions, responses to assessments and student outcomes.^{1,2}
- Determining the elements of SEL interventions that should remain consistent and what can be **adapted to fit the local context of students.**²
- Being more consistent in **disaggregating impact data** by race, ethnicity and context in evaluations of SEL programs.¹
- Identifying **effective strategies** for teachers and school leaders to create safe learning environments for diverse students.³

Leader working to fill this gap:

In her work, **Zaretta Hammond**, author of *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain*, seeks to contextualize SEL to make it responsive to diverse students’ needs and build on their traditions of resilience.

School systems are improving alignment across in-school and out-of-school-time SEL



State of the field:

While the SEL and youth development fields share much in common, SEL efforts by district and out-of-school-time providers are **often disconnected**, thus reducing coherence.^{1,2}

Gap to be addressed:

The SEL fields need to learn more about how afterschool and summer learning programs can **reinforce SEL efforts happening in schools**, how districts can partner with these programs to create **more alignment** to enable student SEL development, and how the **SEL skills of program staff** affect student SEL outcomes.^{1,3}

Leader working to fill this gap:

The **Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality** is the technical assistance provider to members of the Wallace Foundation network. The Center recently partnered with the Susan Crown Exchange to develop the [*Preparing Youth to Thrive SEL Guide*](#) for out-of-school-time providers.

New Wallace-funded network of districts



In 2016, the Wallace Foundation awarded **nine pairs of districts and their afterschool partners** planning grants to develop a plan to “improve adult practices that support the development of students’ SEL skills.” Wallace will award **implementation grants** to six pairs among these nine in the summer of 2017.

Some schools and school systems are testing the potential of personalized learning models to enhance SEL skills



State of the field:

A *nascent* field, personalized learning models customize instruction to fit the needs of each student, often via technology.¹ Most of these models advocate *expanded definitions of student success* and focus on *building students' SEL skills alongside academic content mastery*.

Gaps to be addressed:*

How does personalized learning support the development of student SEL competencies?

- How do school systems using personalized learning also *build student SEL skills*?
- Which personalized learning *classroom practices* help develop student agency, self-efficacy and persistence?
- What changes in the *learning environment* impact student agency and mindsets?

Leader working to fill these gaps:

Next Generation Learning Challenges, an organization that helps teachers reimagine public education, is working with schools using personalized learning to identify the measures and measurement approaches that matter most to teachers, including SEL measures.

How can CMO leaders design personalized learning systems that cultivate student SEL?

- What CMO *models* lead to better SEL outcomes?
- What are ways to *launch and scale* CMOs that address student SEL competencies?

What are the best ways to use technology to help students develop their SEL competencies?

- What are the *best technology tools* in the market that support SEL?
- What student SEL and academic *outcomes* do these technology tools achieve?

Researchers (with the support of many SEL funders) are developing valid and reliable assessments for SEL



State of the field:

Currently, most SEL assessments **use self-reports, teacher reports or behavioral tasks** to measure student SEL skills. These tools do not always measure what they are supposed to measure (low validity) and do not produce consistent results (low reliability). Some tools can also be costly and time-consuming for schools.¹

But, there are **bright spots**: Recent research shows that CORE Districts' SEL measures are more accurate and consistent.²

Gap in the field:

The SEL field needs **new measures** to replace or add to self-reports, teacher reports or proxy measures of SEL skills. Also, few **assessments** evaluate student knowledge of SEL and their ability to execute SEL skills.³

Leaders working to fill this gap:

There are several leading efforts in this area, including the **Funders' Collaborative for Innovative Measurement, Mindset Scholars Network, Raikes Foundation's School Support Network** and **CASEL's Assessment Work Group**.

Goals of CASEL's Assessment Work Group⁴

1 Actionable information

Future product:

A teacher-friendly inventory of SEL assessments

2 Conceptual alignment

Future product:

Research to align SEL frameworks to facilitate measurement of SEL

3 Measurement design principles

Future product:

A design challenge of next-gen SEL measures (call issued in 2017)

4 Network of researchers

Future product:

Growing network of SEL researchers plus a new blog series

Researchers are evaluating the impact of SEL programs for different students in diverse contexts



State of the field:

Several research studies have quantified the impact of SEL, but provide **little information about the different kinds of impact on diverse students in different settings**. Also, some critics of SEL argue that there is **little empirical evidence** to show how schools actually influence the development of “soft skills.”¹

Gaps to be addressed:

Outstanding questions in the field include:²

- What are the **essential elements** of SEL programs that yield impact? Which elements could vary across schools?
- What **modifications** to SEL programs can yield impact for **students from different cultural groups**?
- At different educational levels, **how long** should SEL programs be to yield meaningful impact for students?
- What is the **long-term impact** of SEL programs? How does this compare to the **short-term impact**?

Leader working to fill this gap:

Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) is studying schools that are outperforming in SEL (based on CORE Districts’ analyses) to unpack what these schools are doing and draw lessons for the field.³

A new statistic in the SEL literature



In 2017, a meta-analysis of 82 school-based SEL programs involving over 97,000 students showed that, on average, these programs contributed to a **13 percentile-point gain in student academic achievement**.⁴

But questions remain: For whom? Which particular skill sets? And under what conditions?

Researchers and practitioners are exploring different models to help school systems learn and improve



State of the field:

A pioneering effort, the **Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI)** connected districts for shared learning to enable their systemic implementation of SEL. Now, researchers and practitioners are **experimenting with new network models to facilitate cross-district learning**. One of these models is the “networked improvement community” (or “NIC”) rooted in **improvement science**, a resource-intensive approach championed by the Carnegie Foundation.¹

Gap to be addressed:

Practitioners recognize the value of networks. But, the SEL field lacks **scalable models** that support **sustained outcome improvements through learning and collaboration**.

Leader working to fill this gap:

CORE Districts, a network of eight of the largest districts in California, created a NIC in 2016. CORE’s district members decided to focus their improvement work on closing gaps in math for black and Latino students in grades 4-8 (with SEL as a key contributor to the improvement). For CORE, this is also an experiment to test the scalability of the NIC.

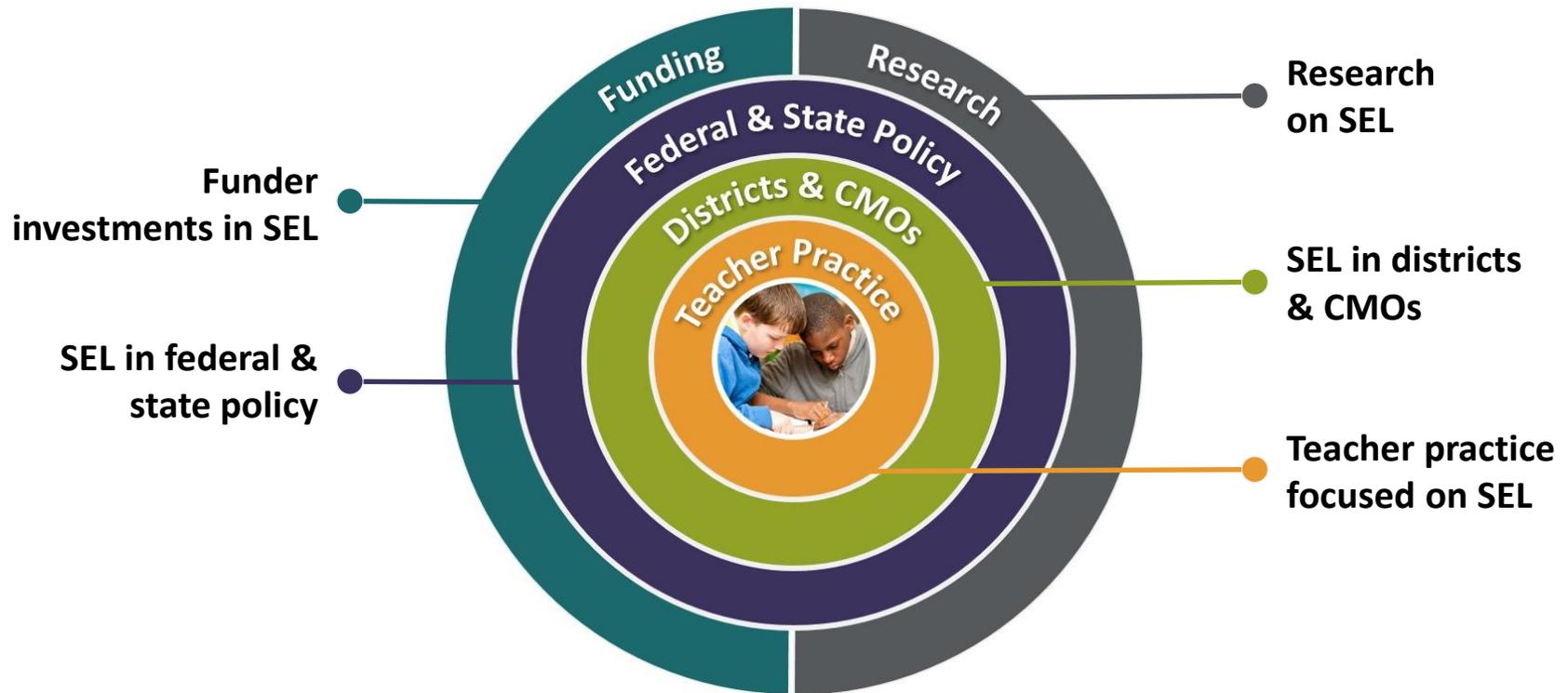
Principles of improvement science¹

- 1 Make the work **problem-specific** and **user-centered**
- 2 Focus on **variation in performance**
- 3 See the **system** that produces the current outcomes
- 4 We cannot improve at **scale** what we cannot **measure**
- 5 Use **disciplined inquiry** to drive improvement
- 6 Accelerate learning through **networked communities**

4 | Key insights and recommendations

We conducted research in five broad areas to survey the SEL field and highlight opportunities for the education sector to build on SEL's momentum into the future

Our research framework



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Overall, our research findings highlight salient *needs* in the SEL field across all five areas



Teacher practice focused on SEL

- Teachers need **high-quality professional development** (especially to build their own SEL skills), **support from their school leaders**, and **SEL implementation tools**
- Promising supports for teachers are **personalized, ongoing** and **collaborative**



SEL in districts & CMOs

- School systems need **help integrating SEL** into their existing structures, **partnerships to learn** new approaches, and **support to ensure consistent implementation quality**
- Bringing systems together in a **network** is one key model to meet these needs



SEL in federal & state policy

- Federal law gives states the flexibility to incorporate **new measures of student success** into their accountability systems, including measures related to SEL
- But the field knows little about **how to use SEL measures for accountability**



Research on SEL

- Researchers are working to **codify SEL assessments**, but practitioners need more **guidance on how to use the data** to improve their work
- Research is showing how **low-cost, online programs** can build positive mindsets but more bright spots on effective use are key



Funder investments in SEL

- Many SEL funders are currently **investing in research**, such as impact assessments of SEL programs, to **build the evidence-base for SEL**
- But comparatively **fewer funders are supporting the implementation of SEL** in schools and school systems, including professional development for teachers

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- Clarify (and act on) the **throughline** from investments to **impact on practice and better outcomes for students**
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4.A | **Teacher practice focused on SEL**



In this section, we examine teachers' needs as they implement SEL in their classrooms and explore approaches to meet those needs



What teachers need

They need **professional development** that helps them **understand and develop their own SEL skills**



They need **support from SEL-educated school leaders** who empower teachers to champion SEL efforts



They need **tools to create positive, safe and empathetic learning environments** that enable students to grow their SEL skills

What promising approaches provide

They explicitly **focus on SEL competencies** and deliver **ongoing and personalized professional development**

They create **solutions through innovation**, facilitate **peer-to-peer learning** and support **scaling**

Teachers and school leaders have complementary roles in the implementation of SEL in schools; both contribute to students' development of SEL skills



What teachers should do to promote students' SEL skills¹

- Use specific instructional strategies and classroom management techniques
- Assess instructional strategies that support SEL in the classroom
- Assess students' SEL competencies in the classroom
- Ask for feedback from administrators, coaches or SEL implementation peers
- Implement and/or advocate for SEL in school and district policies

What school leaders should do to promote students' SEL skills¹

- Integrate SEL into academics, curricular resources and feedback mechanisms
- Provide teachers with SEL professional learning experiences
- Identify instructional practices that promote or support SEL
- Connect SEL to other school policies and procedures, such as the school's vision, mission and priorities on school climate



Our research found that practitioners especially need more knowledge, resources and tools in five particular domains to advance teacher practice focused on SEL

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Teachers need to deepen their understanding of SEL and develop their own SEL skills to be able to fully nurture their students' SEL in a safe learning environment

Use specific instructional and classroom management techniques

Assess instructional strategies that support SEL in the classroom

Integrate SEL into academics, curricular resources and feedback mechanisms

Provide teachers with SEL professional learning experiences

Connect SEL to other school policies and procedures, such as the school's vision, mission and priorities on school climate

- Experts consistently agree that **all teachers need to develop their own adult SEL** to be effective in helping students develop their SEL competencies
- Pre-service **education programs for teachers and school leaders are often inconsistent** in their training **on SEL competencies**; not all teachers and school leaders arrive in their schools with sufficient understanding of what it means to support the “whole child,” including SEL
- Teachers must **understand and practice positive relationship-building skills** to create optimal learning environments for students (i.e., environments that are emotionally, physically and intellectually safe)

“We’re expecting teachers to support SEL skills, but then we don’t ask: Do the teachers have these competencies?”

—Leader of teacher support organization



Teachers need formative tools and coaching that can help them assess their instructional strategies to ensure their students are developing SEL skills

Use specific instructional and classroom management techniques

Assess instructional strategies that support SEL in the classroom

Integrate SEL into academics, curricular resources and feedback mechanisms

Provide teachers with SEL professional learning experiences

Connect SEL to other school policies and procedures, such as the school's vision, mission and priorities on school climate

- Teachers need access to **personalized supports and coaching** to analyze their instructional strategies, reflect on what worked and what didn't to foster SEL, and identify opportunities for improvement
- Districts and CMOs can create **“look-fors” that define high-quality instruction that supports SEL**; teachers can then use these documents to assess their instructional strategies against system-wide expectations on an ongoing basis

“if we’re trying to make change happen in schools, we have to think about more than curriculum and professional development, but the kinds of specific implementation [supports] like coaching.”

—Leader of teacher support organization



Teachers need guidance, practice and support to infuse SEL into academic curricula (versus teaching SEL skills separate from academic content)

Use specific instructional and classroom management techniques

Assess instructional strategies that support SEL in the classroom

Integrate SEL into academics, curricular resources and feedback mechanisms

Provide teachers with SEL professional learning experiences

Connect SEL to other school policies and procedures, such as the school's vision, mission and priorities on school climate

- **Guidance in the form of clear expectations and/or standards for SEL integration**, established either at the school or system level, can help teachers understand what high-quality integration looks like¹
- Districts and CMOs may develop **alignment tools** to show how SEL fits with the state's academic standards and the school's teacher evaluation framework or observation rubric; teachers can then **use these tools to reflect on their practice and make adjustments** as needed
- Some experts advise teachers and school leaders to anchor all of their SEL work in rigorous academic instruction so **SEL becomes embedded** in everything the school does

“SEL is the on-ramp to the kind of rigor we want in our classrooms.”

—Author Zaretta Hammond at CASEL's 2017 Cross-District Convening in Oakland, CA



Teachers need tools and know-how to help them lead on SEL in their school and build positive relationships with peers and students

Use specific instructional and classroom management techniques

Assess instructional strategies that support SEL in the classroom

Integrate SEL into academics, curricular resources and feedback mechanisms

Provide teachers with SEL professional learning experiences

Connect SEL to other school policies and procedures, such as the school's vision, mission and priorities on school climate

- Research shows that **strong, positive relationships**—among students and between the teacher and students—**help create learning environments that foster SEL in students**, but teachers may lack the tools and support to develop those relationships
- In schools with large populations of high-need students who have experienced trauma and chronic stress in their lives, the **teachers' role is often that of "modulator of stress,"** yet professional development that teachers receive typically does not give them effective strategies and practices to play this role
- Teachers also need **opportunities to champion SEL** in their schools, for example in teacher-leader roles

"We know teachers in the classroom make a huge difference and it's going to take putting trust into teachers, making them the authority and giving them the training and confidence to lead the charge. ...[Teachers are] the agent of change."

—Leader of teacher support organization



Teachers need school leaders who actively facilitate a shift in the culture of the school in a way that promotes SEL and fosters a more positive learning environment

Use specific instructional and classroom management techniques

Assess instructional strategies that support SEL in the classroom

Integrate SEL into academics, curricular resources and feedback mechanisms

Provide teachers with SEL professional learning experiences

Connect SEL to other school policies and procedures, such as the school's vision, mission and priorities on school climate

- While teachers can be strong advocates for SEL policies in their school, they need **like-minded school leaders who use their position to champion SEL** across the school and with all staff
- For example, school leaders can **change discipline practices** to reduce the disproportional rate of suspensions and expulsions for students of color; they can also **prioritize SEL integration** in their school strategic plan, improvement plan and/or mission and vision statements
- School leaders should also **create time and space** for teachers to **discuss and work collaboratively on issues related to SEL**, such as SEL-academic integration and school climate, among others

“We really need to emphasize the school because it’s so much more powerful to see it at the school level.”

—Leader of teacher support organization

There are examples of professional development programs that work to meet these needs in SEL teacher practice



Programs build adult SEL skills so teachers fully embrace and internalize SEL as part of their practice

FuelEd cultivates teachers' relationship-building skills

CARE for Teachers addresses the attitudes and dispositions teachers need to create a positive learning environment

Programs integrate SEL into academics to help teachers understand that SEL is not “just another thing”

RULER's schoolwide approach promotes emotional literacy and educates teachers to integrate it into their curriculum

Facing History and Ourselves uses a history curriculum to encourage self-awareness and relationship-building skills

Programs facilitate connections among teachers to help them share knowledge about implementing SEL

Sevenszo's crowdsourcing approach connects teachers to tackle SEL implementation challenges

In the following slides, we review each of these programs to highlight their key features

FuelEd and CARE for Teachers provide teachers with tools, regular coaching and ongoing collaboration opportunities to build their own capacity to model SEL for their students



PROGRAM ^{1,2}	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	WHY IS IT INNOVATIVE?
FuelEd	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ FuelEd improves student outcomes by equipping educators with the competencies essential for building relationships in schools▪ Offers two-hour workshops to educators and community members on the science of relationships; six hour school-based professional development experience on effective listening (“Empathy Schools”); and 40-hour year-long professional development training and support for school leaders (“Leadership Institute”)▪ Participants join alumni network upon completion of a FuelEd program to connect and receive additional resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Neuroscience-based approach that targets competencies teachers need to create secure attachments and empathy▪ Combination of supports through workshops, small groups and personalized one-on-one counseling
CARE for Teachers by the Garrison Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ CARE (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience) for Teachers promotes core skills and dispositions teachers need to create and maintain supportive learning environments while retaining their well-being and love of teaching (“self-care”)▪ Four day-long sessions over four-to-five weeks or a five-day summer retreat▪ Offers tools and resources to reduce teacher stress through mindfulness activities such as silent reflection, and using mindfulness in challenging classroom situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Intersession coaching over the phone and internet to help teachers apply their lessons from the program▪ Research-informed approach that addresses teacher well-being, efficacy and mindfulness, translating to greater sensitivity to student needs



Facing History and RULER use different approaches to integrate SEL into academics—one flexible and subject-specific, the other highly-sequenced and schoolwide

PROGRAM ^{1,2}	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	WHY IS IT PROMISING?
Facing History and Ourselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Facing History fosters empathy and reflection, improves students' academic performance, reinvigorates teachers, and builds safe and inclusive schoolsStudents reflect on moral choices through a history curriculum grounded in social justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Flexible and responsive curriculum model designed to meet individual students' needsEquity focus, with a particular attention to urban classroomsEncourages parent and community engagement efforts to accompany curriculum
RULER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">RULER (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing and Regulating) is an evidence-based schoolwide curriculumSchools implement RULER in three phases: Phase I familiarizes members of the school community with “Anchors of Emotional Intelligence”; Phases II and III focus on teacher professional development through RULER coaches and a train-the-trainer modelThere are four training days across two years, online coursework and access to online resources and supportsYale Center for Emotional Intelligence supports RULER implementation in various schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Emphasis on coaching virtuallyBlended trainings that include online courseworkHighly-sequenced implementation approach that builds school climate first and then focuses on curriculum implementation



Sevenzo's user-focused platform empowers teachers to innovate together by testing and refining their ideas, troubleshooting challenges and expanding their work

PROGRAM^{1,2}

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

WHY IS IT PROMISING?

Sevenzo

- Sevenzo is a social impact startup organization whose mission is to **bring together communities to diffuse what works in education** so all students can reach their full potential
- Sevenzo was piloted initially in 2015 through Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Redesign Challenge
- Engaging a **network of teachers in Twitter-style exchange** to create a sense of community among them
- According to the organization's leaders, "our collective goal is to **source as many promising belonging practices as possible** and then work with each other to **remix them** across as many locations as possible"
- **Crowdsourcing model** that can help generate ideas and solutions from teachers on pressing SEL challenges
- **Teacher-driven** so they can share insights, source bright spots, co-design guides and test popular solutions

Our recommendations to strengthen teacher practice focused on SEL:



Create opportunities for teachers to share best practices and develop new solutions to classroom challenges

Teachers crave connections with peers to exchange effective SEL instructional practices and troubleshoot shared problems of practice.

Example: Through the [SEL Innovation Fund](#), NoVo Foundation and Education First are building a nationwide network of teachers who meet and collaborate throughout the year.

Cultivate teacher leadership to promote SEL and advance high-quality practice

Teacher leaders are well-positioned to model SEL practices for peers and work with their school leaders on local implementation of SEL.

Example: By adopting new teacher leadership policies, [states](#) and [districts](#) can deploy their teacher leaders to spearhead SEL efforts and assist with teacher professional development.

Support clear frameworks and tools to help teachers embed SEL into instruction

Frameworks can help teachers understand what integrating SEL into their practice looks like, and tools can support them in doing so day-to-day.

Example: Classroom observation rubrics that embed SEL can help teachers understand the elements of [high-quality teaching practice](#) that are effective in building students' SEL skills.

Help schools address adult SEL skills in their local theory of action for SEL

Helping teachers develop their own SEL skills via professional learning and other supports should be part of a school's SEL strategy.

Example: The [Future Project](#) mobilizes school leaders, teachers and staff around a common vision (or "dream") with the explicit goal of shifting attitudes among students and adults.

Our recommendations to strengthen teacher practice focused on SEL:



Build practitioner capacity to use new SEL measures and data for improvement

As the field creates new evidence-based tools to measure students' development of SEL skills, district leaders, principals and teachers need technical assistance and capacity-building support to understand what these tools are, how to use them, and how to analyze the data to make improvements in schools.

Example: Building on its partnership with CORE Districts, Transforming Education created a [guide on measuring SEL competencies](#) in 2016. The organization is also working with school systems on using the measures in this guide.

4.B | SEL in districts & CMOs





In this section, we review what districts and CMOs need to implement SEL across their schools and show how a network model can help them innovate together



Through the Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI), NoVo Foundation and CASEL began supporting the efforts of major districts to scale SEL implementation to all of their students. The SEL field has learned many lessons from the CDI, which are currently informing how other districts approach the same work.

This section highlights areas of continued and pressing need among districts and CMOs, as well as models of support that may help address those areas.

Districts and CMOs need the right infrastructure, robust support from partners, and consistent quality-control mechanisms to deepen and expand SEL implementation



The right infrastructure makes SEL possible at the system level

- System leaders describe a need for **district policies, human resources and training** that support SEL integration into existing system structures
- Districts in particular seek to create **more stability in their operations** regardless of changes in funding, district leadership or political context

Partnerships enable systems to learn new and effective SEL practices

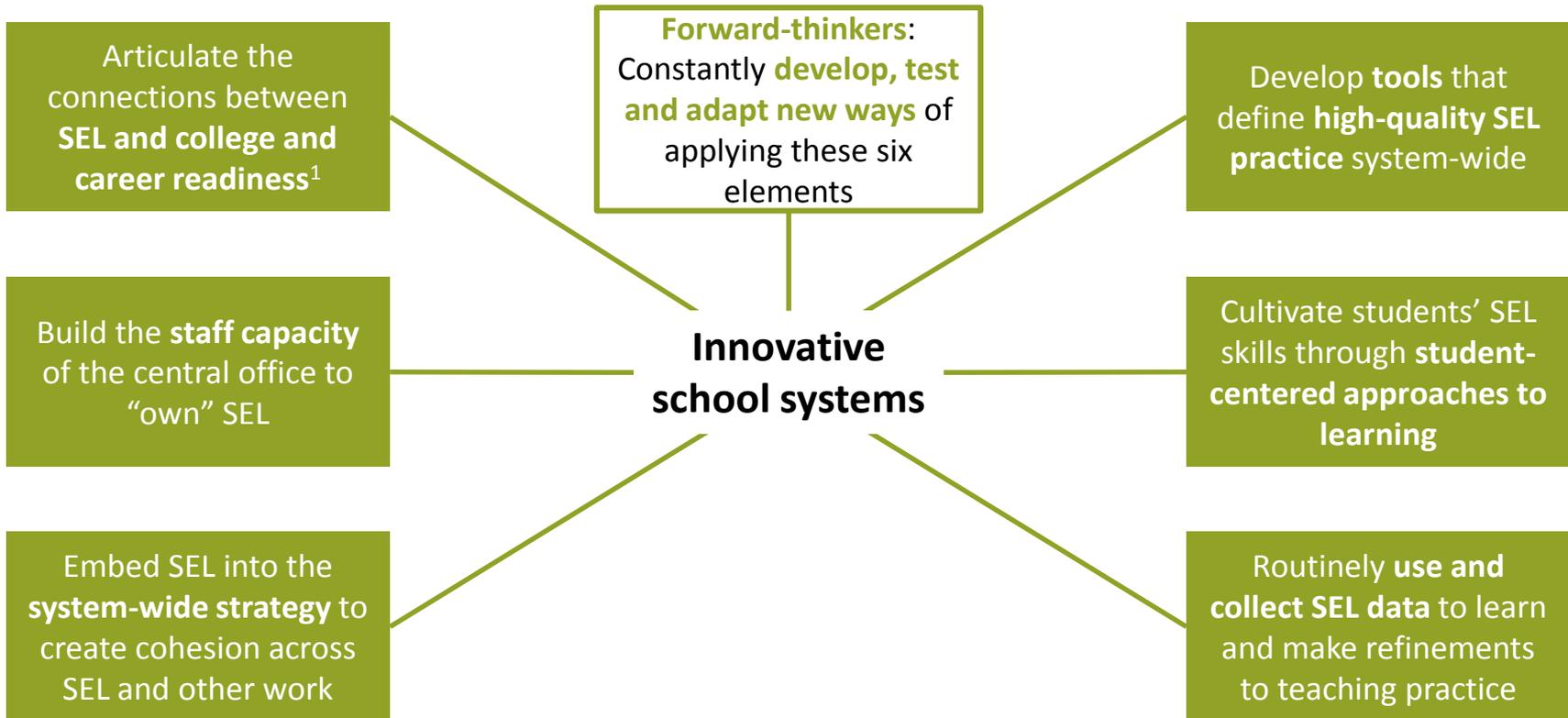
- System leaders need **technical assistance from partners** to help staff “start the discussion” around SEL, which includes defining what SEL will look like across the school system
- System leaders want opportunities to develop **partnerships with other system leaders from across the country** to share ideas and co-create innovative solutions (e.g., through site visits, webinars)

Quality-control mechanisms allow for more consistent SEL implementation

- System leaders **struggle to ensure that implementation quality remains high** in all classrooms implementing SEL
- System leaders **lack time to monitor, assess and report on SEL practices** on a consistent basis, for example by using tools like rubrics to codify and score students’ SEL competencies



Innovative districts and CMOs redefine the meaning of student success to include SEL, which helps them drive SEL integration system-wide



System reinforces that student success encompasses both academic knowledge and skills plus SEL competencies

Example of an innovative CMO: Two Rivers Public Charter Schools in Washington, DC has made great strides in deepening its SEL work, but quality control is a challenge*



Mission

To nurture a diverse group of students to become **lifelong, active participants in their own education**, develop a **sense of self and community**, and become **responsible and compassionate members of society**

Schools & Students

Two elementary schools and **one middle school** serving a total of **750 students**

Approach

A **whole child model** focused on **building 21st century skills (Deeper Learning)** through the implementation of the **EL Education approach** that emphasizes **interactive, hands-on, project-based learning**

Integration strategy

Deeper Learning curriculum designed to build **students' four "scholarly habits,"** including character ("I work hard" and "I'm responsible and independent") plus collaboration and communication ("I'm a team player" and "I care for my community")

Integration challenge

Ensuring consistency in the measurement of Deeper Learning outcomes through "scholarly habits" rubrics: Two Rivers has not been able to dedicate the time to calibrate evaluation on the rubrics with teachers across classrooms and grade levels

Example of an innovative district: Tacoma Public Schools in Washington State is embedding a whole child approach system-wide, but cohesion across initiatives is a challenge*



Mission

To achieve **academic excellence** for all students and close achievement gaps; engage in deep **partnerships** with parents, community and staff around the education of children; ensure **early academic success**; and create a maintain **safe learning environments**

Schools & Students

35 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, 10 high schools and **four early learning centers** serving a total of approximately **30,000 students**

Approach

A **whole child model** building on ASCD's framework for teaching and CASEL's five SEL competencies that focuses on making sure that **students are healthy, engaged, supported, challenged and safe**

Integration strategy

Updated district systems that integrate SEL with **instructional frameworks** to demonstrate the connections, such as how existing strategies can support different SEL competencies

Integration challenge

Weaving together SEL with other district initiatives, such as [restorative justice](#), [equity](#), [Tacoma Whole Child Initiative](#), quality out-of-school-time and Intervention Framework. Tacoma's challenge is creating one cohesive system, rather than adding more initiatives.

* The information in this slide is based on an interview with Jennifer Kubista, Director of Student Life at Tacoma Public Schools, materials on the district's website, and additional input from district staff and experts.
Note: In 2016, Tacoma Public Schools received a planning grant from the Wallace Foundation to address SEL.



In recent years, districts and CMOs have increasingly joined networks to learn from one another and enhance their own local SEL implementation efforts

Why a network model?¹

Networks bring organizations together as **equal partners** around a **common and well-defined purpose** to do one or more of the following:

Develop or enhance **tacit knowledge**

Develop or enhance **technical knowledge**

Share information and build **awareness**

Reach mutually **agreed-upon goals**

Go to **scale**

Introduce **new program or approach**

Provide **political cover** for difficult work

Create a **movement**

Four networks in the SEL field²

Well-established

Emerging

New in 2017

Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI)

CORE Districts (networked improvement community)

Excellence Through Social-Emotional Learning (exSEL) Network

Tristate Student-Centered Learning Network

While all four networks share a focus on SEL, their design, goals and approaches to the work are different



Well-established

Emerging

New in 2017

Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI)¹

- **10 large districts** across the country
- Launched in **2011**
- Led by **CASEL**; support from **NoVo Foundation**
- **Goals** are to: (a) **build district capacity** and (b) **document lessons learned** for the field
- **AIR's interim evaluation findings** show CDI enhanced district readiness to roll out/sustain SEL

CORE Districts (networked improvement community)²

- **Eight large CA districts**
- Led by **CORE Districts**; support from **Transforming Education** and **PACE**
- Created **networked improvement community** (NIC) in 2016-17
- CORE Districts NIC's aim is to **close math gaps for black and Latino youth in grades 4-8, with SEL as a key strategy**

Excellence Through Social-Emotional Learning (exSEL) Network³

- **MA districts** (*first cohort TBD*)
- Led by **Rennie Center, Teachers21** and **Transforming Education**
- Will convene an **SEL Planning Team** from each district; 4-6 people from central office and schools
- **Year one goal** is to help districts create a **practical plan** for SEL implementation

Tristate Student-Centered Learning Network⁴

- **21 districts** in **CO, DE** and **MA** (*first cohort TBD*)
- Led by **Rodel Foundation** (DE), **Colorado Education Initiative** and **Rennie Center** (MA)
- Will focus on **SEL and personalized learning** policy and practice
- Network will make **district- and school-level investments**; goal is to create and inform **state policy**



Building on the initial lessons from these four networks (and others), we identify five core design principles that can help inform future network-building



Design principles to guide a network's form and function*

User-centered: Network is built around the specific needs and priorities of participants

Community-grounded: Network fosters community among all participants as well as several micro-communities within the broader network

Learning-focused: Network uses diverse tools and methods, including virtual technologies, to sustain cross-participant learning

Cross-functional: Network engages individuals at different levels, from system leaders to school-level staff, to reinforce a systemic approach to SEL

Action-oriented: Network leverages learning to drive meaningful action by participants, including efforts to improve outcomes through SEL implementation



During the initial design and pilot phase, a network should build a foundation for collaboration by identifying needs, creating processes and framing the work



Network priorities in the short term

Conduct participant needs assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Explore what participants need to advance their SEL implementation and identify common areas for collaboration
Establish network processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop the network's systems and processes that will help participants share their experiences and lessons from SEL implementation and connect frequently with each other
Begin to connect SEL efforts to student success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Communicate consistent messages about the links between SEL and student success; frame the work of the network as elevating SEL to improve student success

As the network matures, districts and CMOs can use the network to innovate together, measure their progress and share their lessons with the broader SEL field



Network priorities in the long term

**Focus on innovation
(and the diffusion of
those innovations)**

- Help participants develop, test and refine innovative solutions to SEL implementation, and guide them to spread or scale their solutions to more schools and classrooms

**Document and share
lessons learned**

- Collaborate with TA providers, researchers and other partners to codify and disseminate effective practices at the system and school levels for implementing SEL with quality

**Measure to identify
successes and tackle
challenges**

- Define common metrics that any district and CMO may use to measure the progress of their SEL initiative; use data to identify “bright spots” and mine them for best practices

Our recommendations to advance SEL implementation in districts & CMOs:



Foster collaboration among districts and CMOs with a focus on teacher practice

School system SEL networks should prioritize improving classroom practice, which means engaging a cross-section of leaders and staff.

Example: The [Massachusetts ExSEL network](#) plans to help district teams develop SEL change management and implementation plans. Teams consist of both district and school leaders.

Help districts and CMOs adopt a continuous improvement agenda

School systems need to define how they will use SEL data over time to adapt and align programs, policies and practices to improve student SEL and academic outcomes.

Example: Transforming Education's [case study of CORE Districts](#) describes how communities of practice help them learn and improve together.

Offer guidance on how to select and use the right SEL measures to drive change

School systems need information and technical assistance to make the best use of SEL metrics and assessments to monitor, evaluate and improve their SEL implementation work.

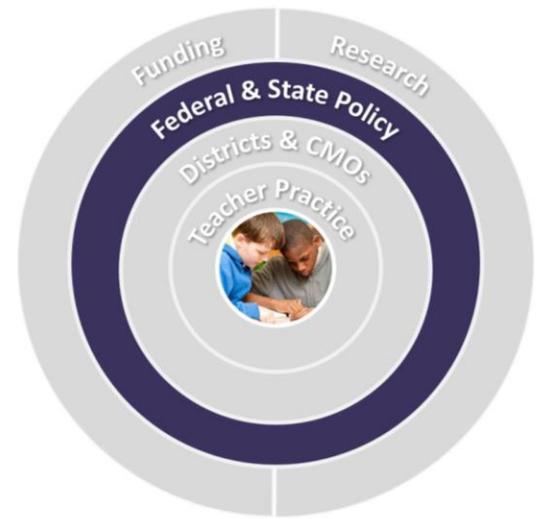
Example: [Measuring SEL](#), a new website by CASEL and its partners, will feature practitioner-friendly resources on SEL assessments.

Codify and share lessons learned from highly innovative districts and CMOs

The SEL field should learn from [forward-thinking school systems](#) that are continuously pushing their practice by rethinking the school day, teacher's role and use of class time (among other innovations) to grow students' SEL skills.

Example: [Valor Public Schools](#) is documenting its innovative SEL integration efforts to inform its work and build the field's knowledge-base.

4.C | SEL in federal & state policy





In this section, we discuss new policy developments that are building momentum for SEL, but which also raise challenges the SEL field will need to address

At the federal level: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

- ESSA recognizes the potential **role of SEL in school quality and student success**, which legitimizes in federal policy the SEL field's efforts over several years
- ESSA focuses attention on a **well-rounded education** and more comprehensive, state-determined **school improvement strategies that can be SEL-related**
- While there is increasing demand across the country for a focus on SEL, the SEL field **does not yet know how to appropriately account for SEL in school accountability systems**; the field should be wary of efforts that use SEL for accountability purposes

At the state level: SEL standards and teacher preparation requirements

- More states are creating **standards for SEL competencies** to complement K-12 academic standards
- As states codify expectations for SEL across grade levels, there is a need to **provide teachers with support to help their students successfully meet these competencies**, from teacher preparation programs to professional development

ESSA creates new opportunities for states to use SEL as an indicator of school quality and student success



Key facts about the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

- 1 ESSA, which was **signed into law in 2015** by President Obama, replaced the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB); ESSA continues NCLB's **focus on equity** by prioritizing college and career readiness, equitable access to effective educators and funding to support low-income children¹
- 2 ESSA requires all states to include an **indicator of school quality or student success in state accountability systems**, which can include SEL measures; according to federal statute, the indicator must be valid and reliable, provide meaningful differentiation of schools, be used across grade spans, be applicable statewide, and be disaggregated by student group
- 3 In response to ESSA, states must submit to the U.S. Department of Education their **state ESSA accountability plans** either in April or September 2017; in these plans, states define their indicator of school quality or student success

We analyzed the state ESSA accountability plans submitted by 17 states and the draft versions of 13 additional states to examine the extent to which states address SEL in their proposed indicator of school quality or student success²

1. Education First (2016); 2. Our analysis included all publicly available state plan frameworks, drafts or final submissions as of April 3, 2017, which included the following states (states that have submitted in **bold**): AL, **AZ**, **CO**, **CT**, **DC**, **DE**, ID, IL, IA, KY, **LA**, **ME**, MD, **MA**, **MI**, MT, **NV**, **NJ**, **NM**, NC, **ND**, OH, OK, **OR**, RI, SC, SD, **TN**, **VT** and WA.



Many states selected student absenteeism and/or post-secondary/career readiness to measure school quality and student success, both of which indirectly target SEL

Chronic absenteeism

What it is: Chronic absenteeism captures students who miss more days of school than a particular threshold. Research has linked chronic absenteeism to lower academic achievement.¹

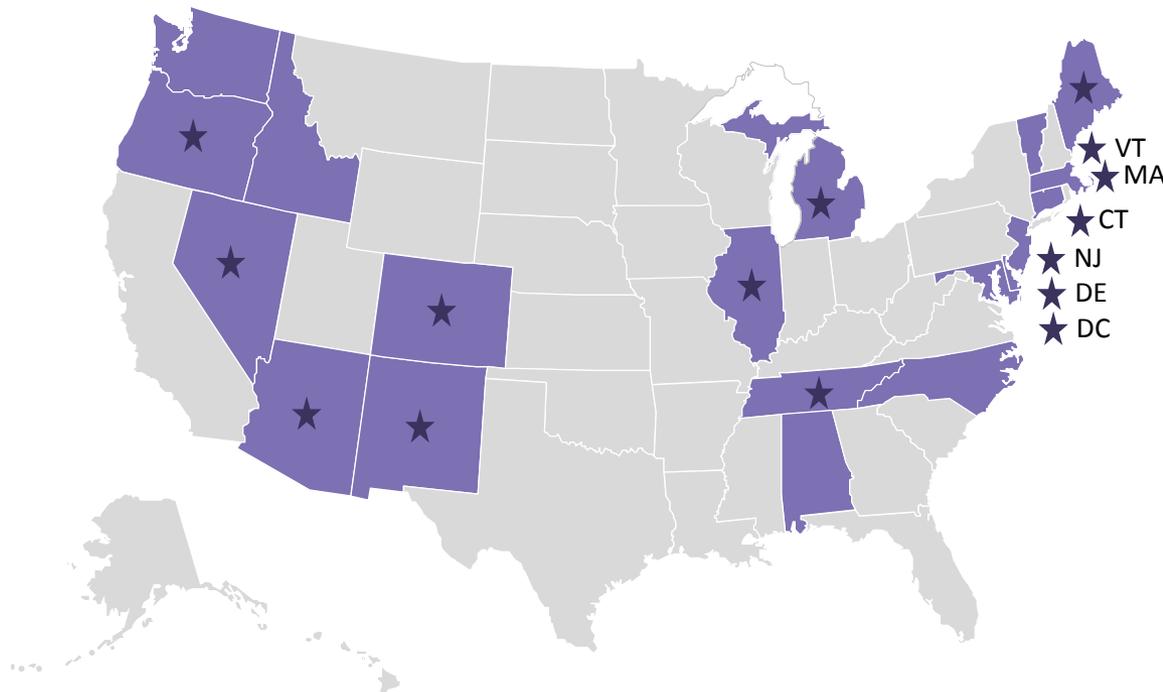
Possible connection to SEL: If students do not feel safe or engaged in school, the chronic absenteeism rate may increase.

Post-secondary/career readiness

What it is: States use various measures, such as dual credit, ACT or SAT scores, advanced coursework and career/technical education.

Possible connection to SEL: Many argue that SEL is a critical contributor to students being ready for life after school.

20 states proposing to use student absenteeism and/or post-secondary/career readiness in accountability





Other states intend to use indicators that are more closely associated with SEL, such as student discipline and school climate, to measure school quality and student success

Some indicators include:

School climate or student engagement

States can use surveys to measure **student-teacher relationships, student safety, and student and school-community engagement.**¹

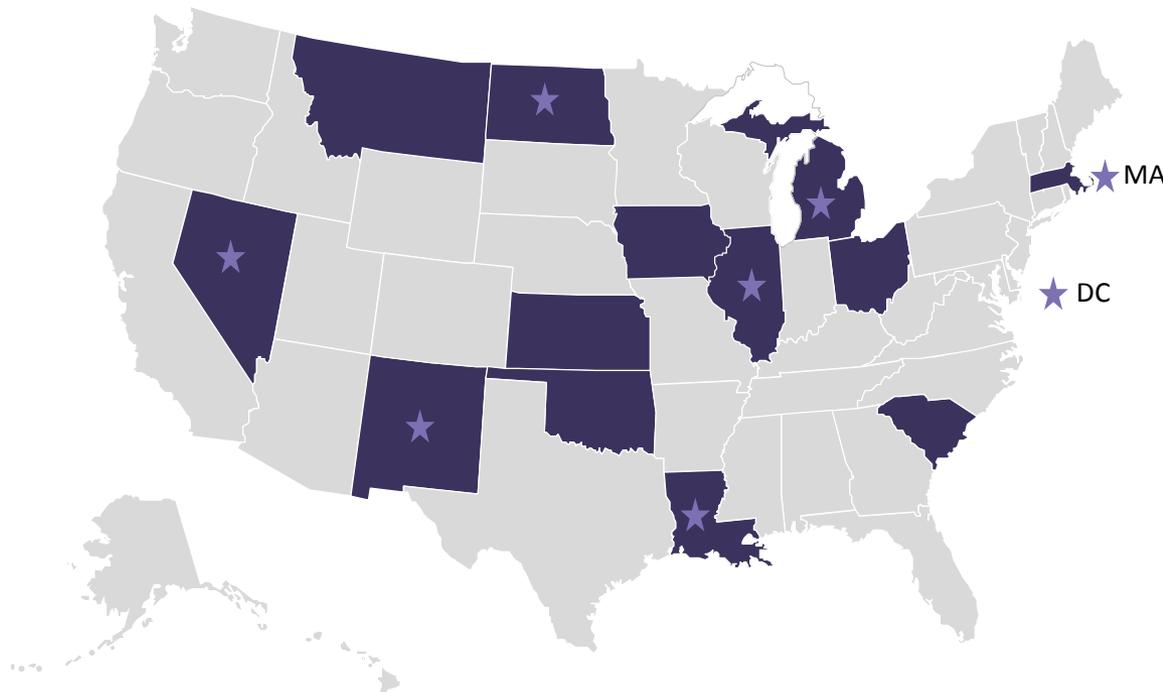
Student discipline

States can **disaggregate suspension and expulsion rates** by student subgroup to address schools' approach to creating a **positive learning environment, including equity** issues due to disproportionality.¹

Access to or participation in extracurricular courses

States can use extracurricular activities as a **proxy for student engagement** in a way that may foster their SEL skills.

14 states proposing to use new or innovative indicators that are more explicitly aligned with SEL



As states include SEL-related measures into their accountability systems, the SEL field faces big questions



Are states using measures that are valid and reliable?

- Some indicators like student discipline draw on **administrative data reported by schools**. However, there is a risk that schools under-report discipline rates or reduce suspensions and expulsions without tackling the underlying school climate issues.¹
- Other indicators call for states to use **surveys** to measure different aspects of school climate and student engagement. Since data are self-reported, there is a risk of bias. For example, some experts do not recommend using surveys for high-stakes decisions.¹
- **The SEL field is still searching for valid and reliable tools to measure SEL, but emerging practices are ripe for study.**

What are the most appropriate uses of SEL in state accountability systems?

- A key premise of ESSA's requirement for a school quality or student success indicator is that schools can contribute to the development of students' SEL skills. However, **researchers are still working to determine the actual effect of schools on students' SEL and school climate** outcomes.²
- Researchers argue that the SEL field and stakeholders, including policymakers, **do not yet fully understand** the pros and cons of incorporating SEL measures into high-stakes accountability systems.²
- **The SEL field does not yet know the potential impact of including SEL in accountability decisions, but there is demand to use SEL assessments for formative purposes.**



In addition to incorporating SEL-related measures into ESSA accountability plans, some states are prioritizing SEL through school improvement strategies

Growing interest in SEL for school improvement

- Districts and schools are developing a **greater awareness and understanding** of the **connections between SEL and academic outcomes**
- States can use ESSA accountability requirements to **broaden the definition of high-quality schools to include SEL**
- Many districts have **already started using SEL-related approaches** to improve schools

Example: Connecticut's Evidence-Based Practice Guides¹

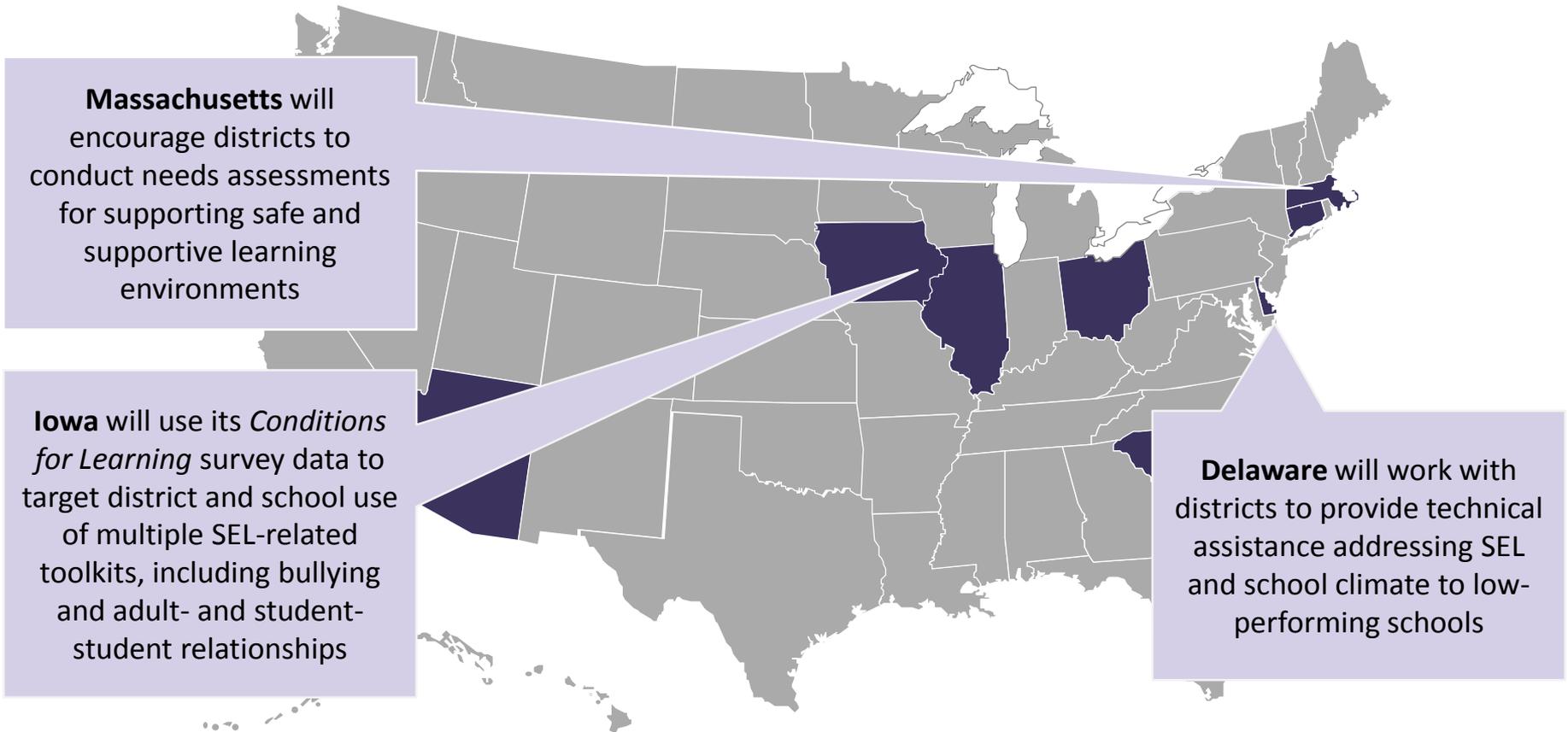
In its ESSA plan, Connecticut's school improvement strategies involve **creating guidance documents, templates, tools and professional learning opportunities** to:

Deliver **evidence-based improvement strategies** for schools identified as needing improvement

Offer both holistic and targeted **supports** to districts and schools in **early learning (including SEL), school climate and family engagement**

Meet districts' and schools' needs in **trauma-informed practices**, reducing **chronic absenteeism** and reducing exclusionary **discipline**

To date, eight states are introducing or expanding a role for SEL in their efforts to improve low-performing schools



States have included SEL in their school improvement strategies as part of their ESSA plans

Many states are also prioritizing SEL through state SEL learning goals and standards



Why a focus on SEL standards in 2017?

Districts and schools are asking for SEL to meet student needs beyond academics

ESSA created a **policy environment nationally** that facilitates a statewide focus on SEL

The **public is increasingly aware** that students need SEL to be successful in college, careers and life

Example: CASEL's Collaborating States Initiative (CSI)¹

CASEL is working with eight states to **develop policies or guidelines to support their implementation of high-quality SEL**. CSI states are tackling this challenge in diverse ways:

By **creating new statewide SEL learning standards** (or competencies, goals or benchmarks)

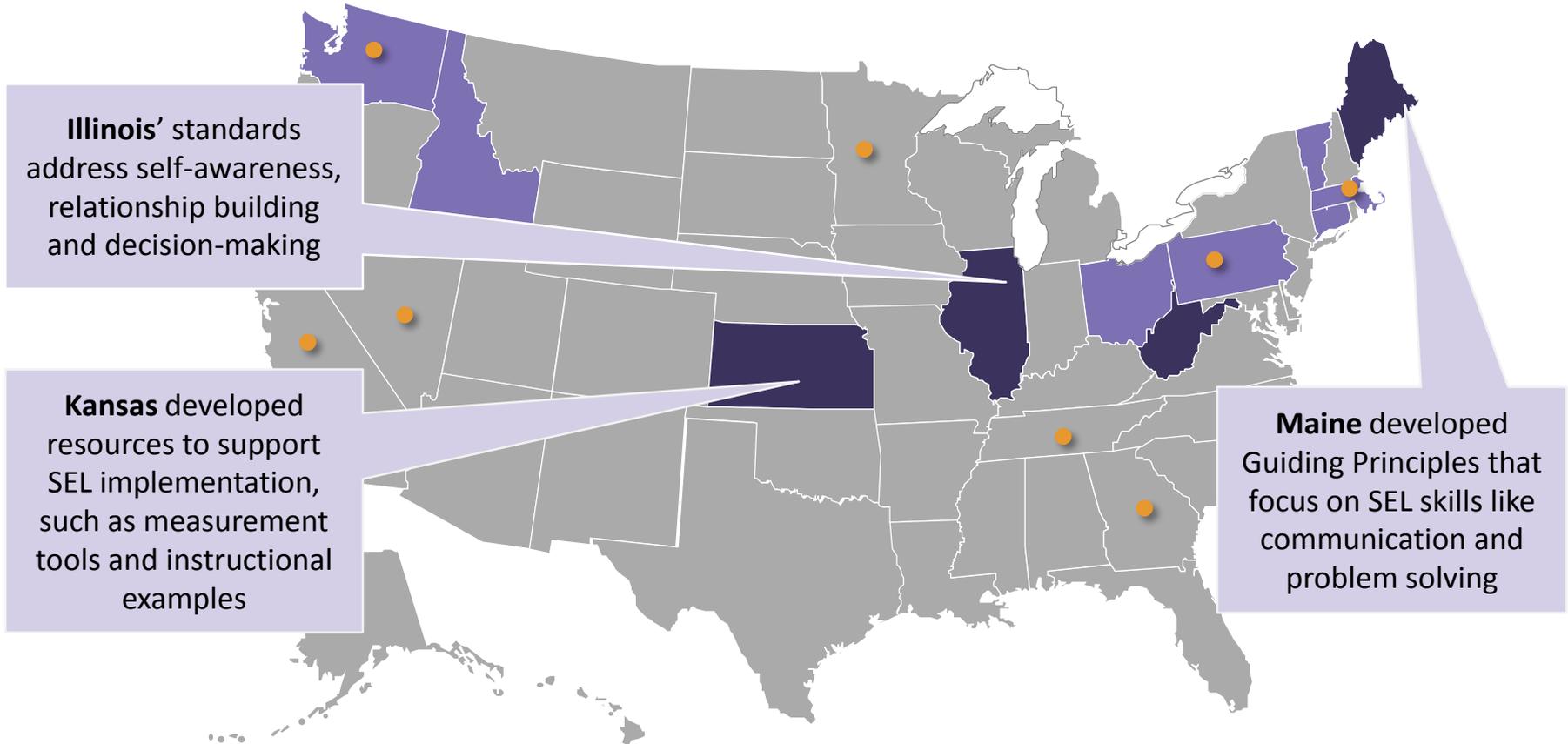
Or

By **establishing policy guidance** for the implementation of SEL across the state

Or

By **integrating SEL into existing policies** (rather than create new SEL policies)

All states have learning goals at the preschool level, but a handful of states are leading the way in setting policies to support SEL in their schools across multiple grades



States have SEL learning goals with developmental benchmarks from preschool through high school
States have SEL learning goals with developmental benchmarks from preschool into early elementary

States participating in CASEL's Collaborating States Initiative



Most states have also incorporated SEL into their teacher preparation requirements, but in practice courses often lack an emphasis on cultivating students' SEL skills

State of SEL in teacher preparation programs¹

- While all states have **certification requirements** that address adult SEL, only 27 states have certification requirements that have a comprehensive focus on students' SEL (i.e., target four or five of the CASEL competencies)
- Many teacher preparation programs address the adult SEL of aspiring teachers, but the majority of the **coursework does not emphasize students' SEL**
- Teacher preparation programs are mostly aligned with state-level teaching certification requirements on adult SEL; **alignment is weaker with respect to students' SEL**

Teacher preparation programs need to do more to equip aspiring teachers with the competencies necessary to build the SEL skills of their students once they begin teaching, such as:²

Align SEL **expectations** and **language** across all teacher preparation faculty and advisors



Model, create many opportunities for **practice** and provide regular **feedback**



Place **student-teachers** in schools implementing SEL and assign them teachers with SEL experience

Our recommendations to seize opportunities in the current state & federal policy:



Connect state/district leaders and teachers to develop and improve policies

More state-local collaboration can enable state leaders to learn from SEL implementation experiences on-the-ground and teachers to understand and shape policies related to SEL.

Example: These collaborations can analyze the use of SEL approaches as school improvement strategies and offer recommendations.

Support research to study the effectiveness of new policies

New research can shed light on the extent to which new policies related to SEL in state ESSA plans facilitate high-quality implementation of SEL and contribute to raising student outcomes.

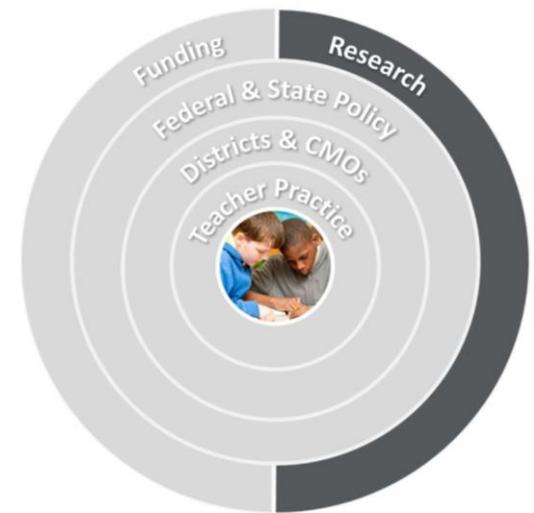
Example: Research can identify what policies work in what contexts (e.g., school factors and student sub-groups) and investigate why.

Promote partnerships between teacher prep programs, districts and SEL experts

Partnerships designed with a focus on SEL offer a method to address deficiencies along the pipeline from teacher preparation to employment. The partners can identify what teachers need to help students develop SEL skills and then test approaches to meet those needs among the rising corps of new teachers.

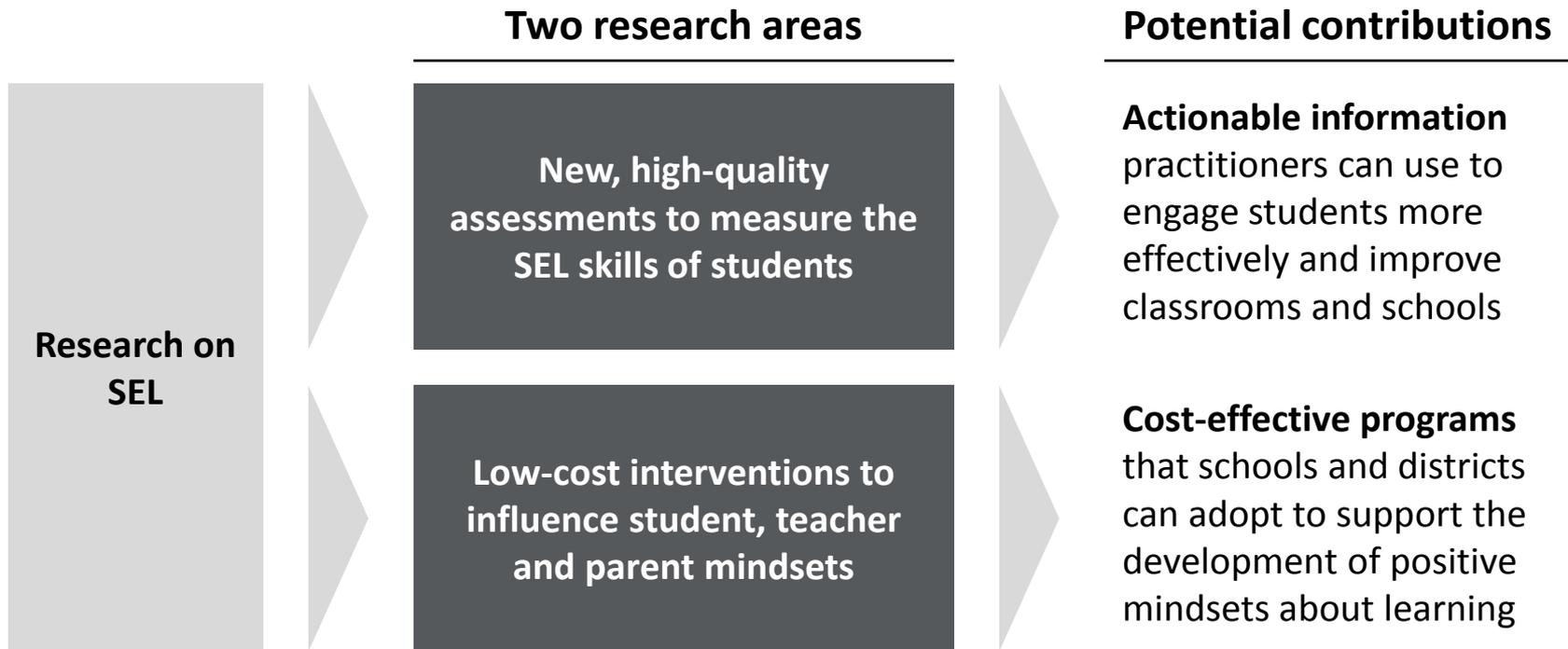
Example: Teacher preparation providers across the country are participating in a [community of practice](#) to learn from one another and develop strategies to transform teacher preparation. This kind of collaborative model may also help integrate SEL into teacher preparation.

4.D | Research on SEL





In this section, we explore the promise of two research areas aiming to help practitioners assess SEL and apply high-impact interventions to cultivate students' SEL skills



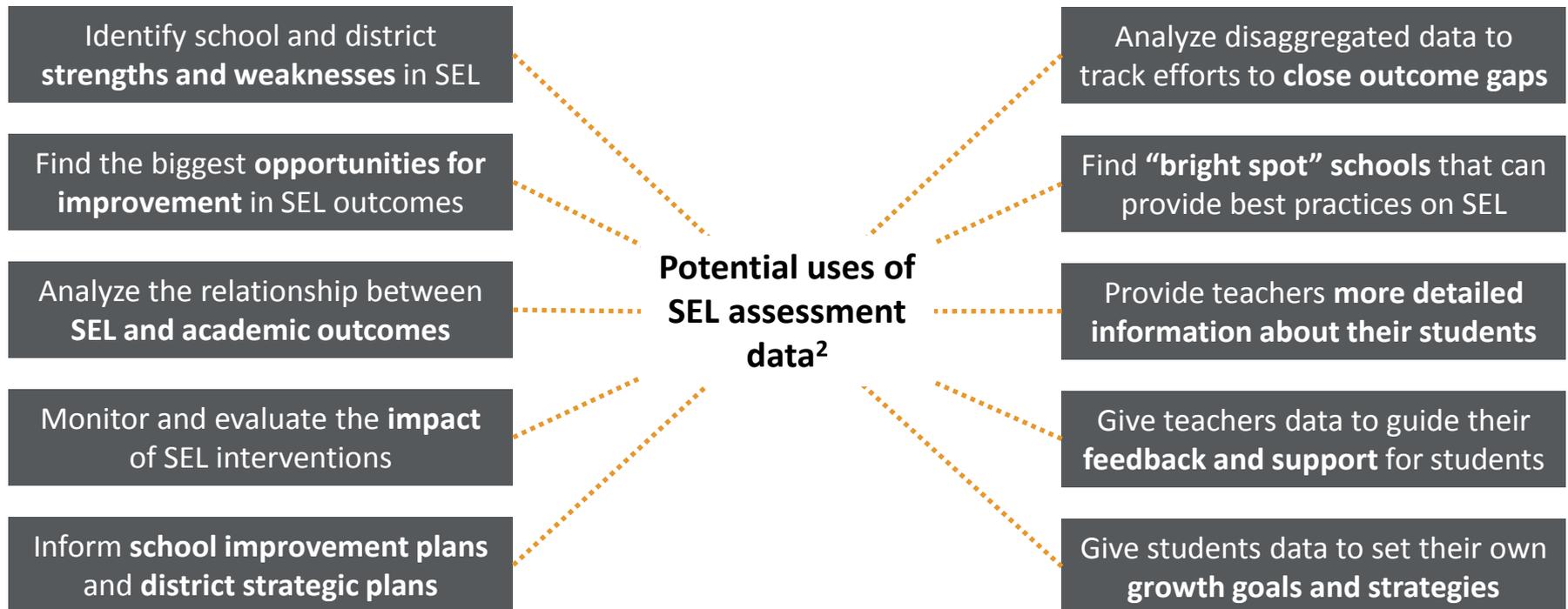
The purpose of this section is to spotlight select research efforts with potentially significant implications for teacher practice. Readers interested in a literature review should consult the following resources:

- [Science of Learning and Development: A Synthesis](#) (2017)
- *The Future of Children's* issue on [Social and Emotional Learning](#) (2017)
- [Advancing the Science and Practice of Social and Emotional Learning](#) (2016)



Researchers can help teachers, principals and district leaders select appropriate SEL assessments and make the most effective use of the data to make improvements

Researchers are in a position to **codify SEL assessments** for teachers, principals and district leaders **and advise them on how they might use assessment data to make critical decisions** regarding SEL in classrooms, schools and districts, such as goal and priority setting and the development of improvement strategies.¹



Example of research project: RAND is creating an online repository of vetted SEL assessments for multiple users



Project background^{1,2}

Funders' Collaborative for Innovative Measurement (FCIM) is funding the development of the repository, which is led by **RAND's Laura Hamilton and Brian Stecher**. The repository will be a website that allows users to **search** and locate SEL measures of interest, **display** information about the measures, **evaluate** the quality and utility of the measures, gain access to and **use** the measures, and help users **connect** with a larger user community.

SEL measures²

The repository will include SEL assessments that measure **two types of SEL competencies**:

- **Interpersonal** competencies such as leadership, communication, collaboration, emotional intelligence and global awareness; and
- **Intrapersonal** competencies such as ethics, goal orientation and setting, grit, learning how to learn, mindsets, motivation, resilience, self-control, self-efficacy and self-regulated learning.

User needs the repository will meet^{1,2}

Teachers, school leaders and other SEL practitioners

A **“one-stop-shop”** with information and guidance on **school-ready SEL measures**

SEL assessment providers

A set of high-quality measures to inform the **development of new SEL assessments**

SEL researchers

A **database of existing knowledge** about SEL assessment on which to **build new research**

Policymakers

Insights about the **opportunities and challenges of SEL measurement** to help shape **policy decisions**



Researchers are testing promising interventions to influence mindsets and contribute to better academic outcomes

What are mindsets?

Mindsets are **beliefs about learning and school**. For students, these include a **growth mindset** (or the belief that intelligence can grow over time), a **sense of belonging**, and a belief that schoolwork has **purpose and relevance**.¹

Why do mindsets matter?

Mindsets help students interpret challenges and adversity in a positive way, which can lead to **increased learning and achievement** in school.¹

What are researchers doing on mindsets?

Mindset Scholars Network is an interdisciplinary collaboration between researchers conducting research on mindsets in K-12 and college. The Network's goals are to understand the role of context in developing mindsets, develop tools to assess mindsets and improve approaches for conducting mindset experiments.¹

Whose mindsets can research help practitioners understand and influence? Some examples...



Students

Students' day-to-day experiences and interactions shape their mindsets about learning; if they **receive different messages about learning**, they can adopt a different mindset.¹



Teachers

Teachers completing a 70-minute online exercise designed to build their **empathy** for students led to **lower rates of student suspensions** and **more trusting teacher-student relationships**.²



Parents & family

Parents' **mindset toward failure**, either a "failure-is-debilitating" or a "failure-is-enhancing" mindset, influences their parenting practices. But these **views and practices can be changed**.³

Example of research project: National Study of Learning Mindsets is testing the impact of low-cost, online mindset exercises for students that could be scalable to many schools



National Study of Learning Mindsets led by UT Austin's David Yeager¹

What the study seeks to answer

- **Student outcomes:** What types of academic inequalities are best addressed by interventions designed to build learning mindsets?
- **School context:** What are the school resources and school climates that make these interventions more or less effective?
- **Ingredients for success:** What specific classroom resources and climates are necessary for the success of these interventions?

What the study is testing & with whom

- **Intervention:** Two separate online sessions that help students learn about mindsets through a combination of selected readings about related topics (e.g., brain's flexibility) and writing exercises (e.g., summary of their learnings, peer advising).
- **Sample:** Random sample of 20,000 ninth grade students in 76 U.S. public high schools.

Why the study matters

- **Nationally-representative results:** Study will determine the intervention's "average" impact on outcomes for all ninth grade students and identify the student characteristics and school factors that have the greatest influence on these outcomes.
- **Scalable contribution to practice:** Researchers will provide the intervention at no cost to schools so they may use it with their students, in light of the research results.

Our recommendations to guide the direction of future research on SEL:



Continue growing knowledge base on how children and youth build SEL skills

The field should keep learning about the theory and practice of SEL skill development among different types and ages of students.

Example: Researchers can add to the existing multidisciplinary research on the [science of learning](#) and translate the findings into practical applications for districts and schools.

Seed and sustain research-practice partnerships to tackle problems of practice

Practitioners should have more opportunities to inform the research that can help them do their work better. These [partnerships](#) should be mutually beneficial, long term and focused on key problems of practice.

Example: Research and practice partners bring unique perspectives to the [study of scale](#).

Investigate what it takes for SEL to be effective at the high school level

Many examples of quality SEL instruction come from elementary/middle schools. The field lacks knowledge about SEL in high schools, where the challenges to implementation are different.

Example: More [case studies](#) can share effective strategies for engaging teachers, staff and students around SEL in the high school context.

Increase practitioner participation in the development of SEL measures

Researcher-led efforts should engage more practitioners in the development of SEL measurement tools. Getting the practitioner perspective early can increase the likelihood that these resources are adopted by schools.

Example: Researchers and practitioners can work together to advance new methods to assess SEL implementation quality.

4.E | Funder investments in SEL



In this section, we analyze trends in funding for SEL to identify unmet needs in the field



Who the major SEL funders are and what they are interested in funding

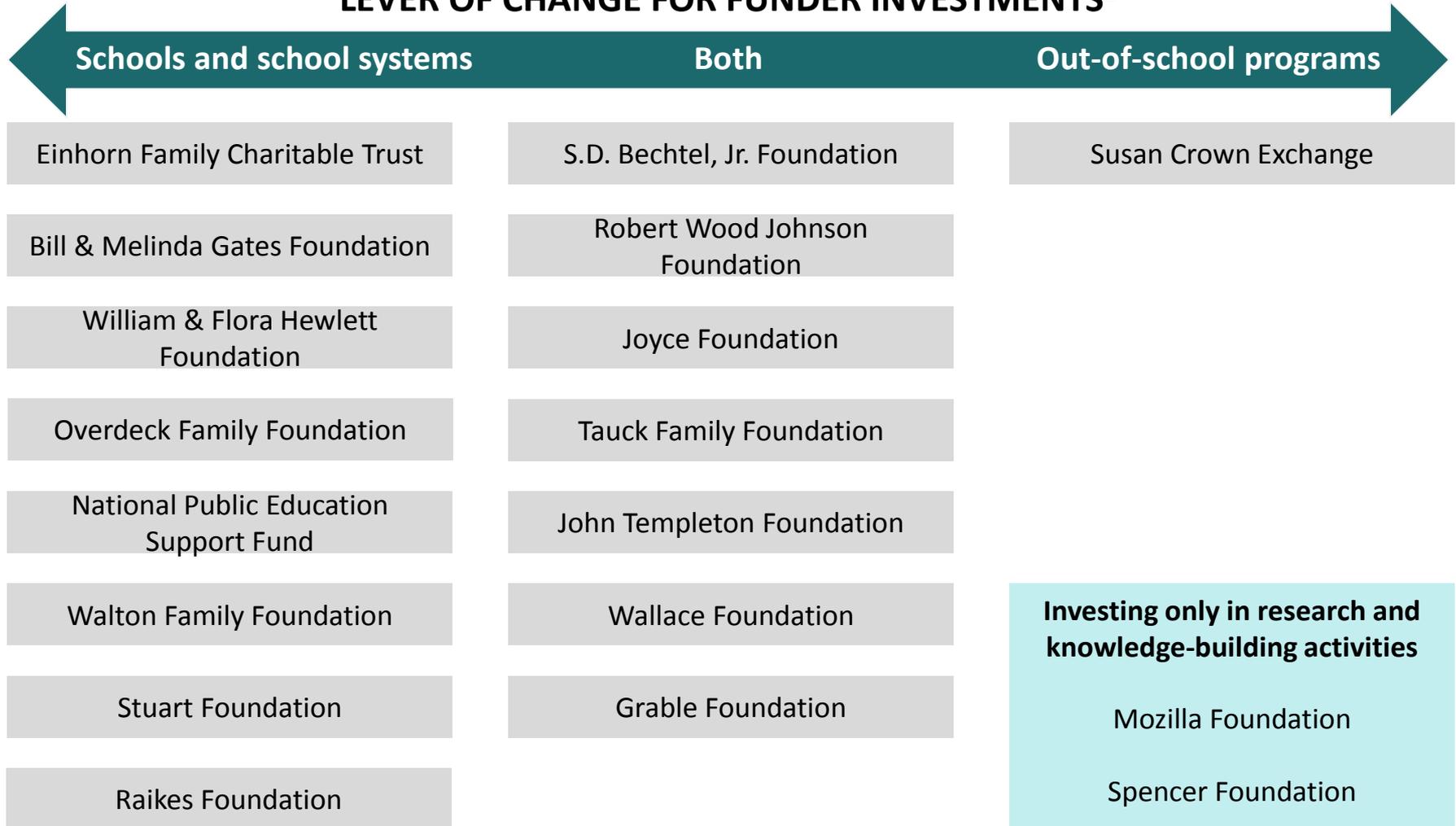
How three funder collaboratives are advancing the field

Trends in funder investments in SEL and areas of unmet need

Many SEL funders focus on in-school plus out-of-school efforts, but only one focuses on out-of-school exclusively



LEVER OF CHANGE FOR FUNDER INVESTMENTS¹





Funders investing in schools and systems either tackle dimensions of SEL (e.g., mindsets, character) or include SEL as part of broader initiatives (e.g., innovative schools)

Foundation	How funder works on SEL ¹	Target age range ¹
Einhorn Family Charitable Trust	Prosocial development	Birth to adulthood
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Personalized learning & innovative schools	Birth to adulthood
William & Flora Hewlett Foundation	Deeper learning	Grades K-12
Overdeck Family Foundation	Personalized learning & innovative schools	Grades K-12
National Public Education Support Fund	Science of human development	Birth to college
Walton Family Foundation	Character & non-cognitive skills	Grades K-12
Stuart Foundation	Multiple dimensions of learning	Grades K-12, but focus on middle and high school grades
Raikes Foundation	Science of learning & learning mindsets	Elementary school grades to college, but focus on adolescents



Funders that work across in-school and out-of-school settings broaden the definition of school success to encompass healthy youth development and environments

Foundation	How funder works on SEL ¹	Target age range ¹
S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation	Character	Grades K-12
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation	Healthy school environments & “culture of health”	Grades pre-K-12
Joyce Foundation	Personal success skills	College and workforce
Tauk Family Foundation	Development of SEL skills	Grades pre-K-12
John Templeton Foundation	Character virtue development	Birth to adulthood, but focus on adolescents
Wallace Foundation	Positive youth development	Grades K-5
Grable Foundation	Positive learning environments	Grades pre-K-12
Susan Crown Exchange	21 st century skills	Birth to adulthood

Funders recently formed three SEL-focused collaboratives, each with distinct goals, audiences and scopes of work*



Grantmakers for Thriving Youth (GTY)¹

Mission/Purpose: Advancing a comprehensive approach to learning and development that will enable all young people to acquire the skills and capacities needed for success in learning, work, citizenship and life

Goals:

Promote awareness, facilitate connections, catalyze collaborations and disseminate knowledge about policies, practices and research among funders in education, child and youth development, family well-being, health and other allied fields

Funders' Collaborative for Innovative Measurement (FCIM)²

Mission/Purpose: Advancing the state of and appropriate use of interpersonal and intrapersonal measures

Goals:

- Create a **national research and innovation hub** to facilitate the ongoing development and application of high-quality measures;
- Catalyze the widespread use of a coherent and scientifically-grounded **taxonomy**;
- Help stakeholders **use measures appropriately**;
- Educate policymakers about the benefits and drawbacks of measures and their appropriate use in **policy** areas such as accountability; and
- Engage stakeholders in a **dialogue** about the development of measures and their value

National Commission on Social, Emotional & Academic Development Funders Collaborative (NCSEAD FC)³

Mission/Purpose: Ensuring the Commission's activities are informed by the many philanthropic efforts dedicated to deepening and accelerating the work of advancing a broader vision of education success



There is overlap in membership across the three SEL funder collaboratives, which underscores funder interest in building the SEL field and deepening knowledge

Grantmakers for Thriving Youth (GTY) Steering Committee¹	Funders' Collaborative for Innovative Measurement (FCIM) Advisory Board²	National Commission on Social, Emotional & Academic Development Funders Collaborative (NCSEAD FC)³
<p>Grable Foundation National Public Education Support Fund Susan Crown Exchange Tauck Family Foundation Walton Family Foundation John Templeton Foundation Wallace Foundation Joyce Foundation NoVo Foundation Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Stuart Foundation S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation Einhorn Family Charitable Trust Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation William & Flora Hewlett Foundation Raikes Foundation</p>	<p>Mozilla Foundation Overdeck Family Foundation Spencer Foundation John Templeton Foundation Wallace Foundation S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation Einhorn Family Charitable Trust Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation William & Flora Hewlett Foundation Raikes Foundation</p>	<p>Anschutz Foundation Dalio Foundation HopeLab Pure Edge, Inc. Joyce Foundation NoVo Foundation Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Stuart Foundation S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation Einhorn Family Charitable Trust Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation William & Flora Hewlett Foundation Raikes Foundation</p>
<p>Members of GTY and FCIM Members of GTY and NCSEAD FC Members of GTY, FCIM and NCSEAD FC</p>		

There are field-wide and funder-specific drivers for these trends, including a need to establish the SEL evidence base



Many funders are clustering in SEL **measurement and evaluation** to build the **evidence base**

- Funders shared that the SEL **field still has much to learn about effective SEL programs and practices**
- As a result, measurement and evaluation are attracting a **wide breath of funders**
- Select funders that prioritize research in their investment strategies are also making grants for **theory-building** (primarily at universities and research organizations)

Due to the lack of evidence-based programs to scale, there is less funding for **SEL implementation**

- Without a solid research base to guide investments in SEL implementation and scaling, there is **limited funding available** for SEL efforts at the **system and school levels**
- Largest implementation grants are to support programs with robust evidence of effectiveness, such as the RULER program developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence
- A few major funders are investing heavily in **out-of-school time** program providers, which often partner with school systems

Our recommendations to inform funder investments in SEL:



Clarify (and act on) the throughline from investments to impact on practice and better outcomes for students

Each SEL funder has a unique mission, set of values and perspective on the SEL field, which drive their investment decisions. They are united by their commitment to SEL as a core contributor to student success.

As funders pursue their individual investment strategies, they should also consider the ways in which their grants might inform, facilitate and strengthen SEL practice in districts and schools to improve student outcomes, especially for underserved students and students of color. Even if funders do not make grants directly to practitioners, the outputs and outcomes from their grants can indirectly make further advancements in SEL practice possible.

Example: Funders interested in research and theory-building activities may prioritize grants with promising practical applications.

Consider different forms of funder collaboration to pursue common goals

Funder partners may pursue different models of collaboration depending on their shared goals. These models include knowledge networks, co-investments or aligned investments, pooled funds, and co-creation of new organizations.

Education First developed a [guide](#) to help funders collaborate successfully. At the start of any collaboration, funders should define the problem to work on together, decide on a scope of action to identify solutions, and determine a strategy and timeline for meeting their goals.

Example: Funders can build on SEL research and lessons learned to date to develop a common investment framework that can help guide and prioritize grants in the area of teacher practice. This framework should include professional development and other strategies to enhance teachers' SEL instruction, SEL integration, adult SEL skills, and data use and analysis capacity.

5 | Conclusion

Finally, we advise the field to consider these three themes as key priorities to steer the ongoing evolution of SEL policy, research and practice into the future



Equity as “North Star”

So SEL learns from underserved communities and communities of color—their cultures, values and dreams—to better serve *all* students in American classrooms.



Power of collaboration

So SEL grows from the collective experiences of diverse stakeholders, all exploring and testing different solutions to shared problems.



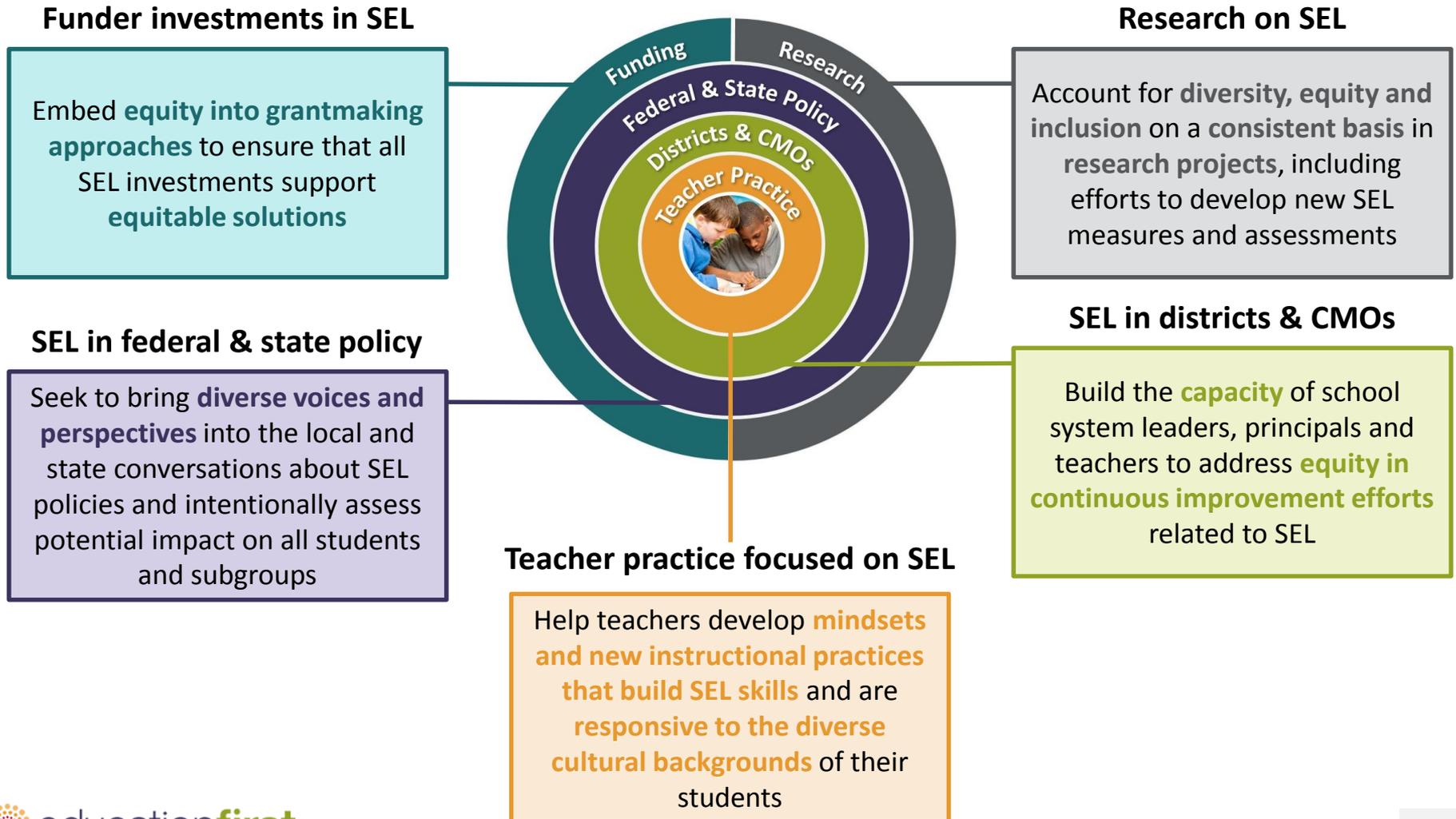
Innovation in the service of practice

So SEL develops new approaches and tools to help practitioners equip their students with the competencies to be successful in college, careers and life.



Equity as “North Star”:

Consider equity from creation of SEL strategies and practices to outcomes, and confront biases that are currently embedded in SEL





Power of collaboration: Help bring people together around a shared vision and goals for SEL

Funder investments in SEL

Use **common investment frameworks** that emerge from funder collaborations to create **coherence** in the SEL field

Research on SEL

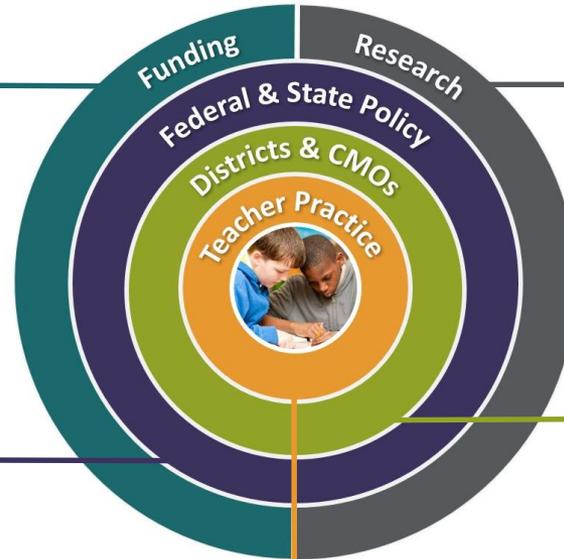
Encourage more communication and partnerships between researchers and practitioners, especially in the area of SEL measurement

SEL in federal & state policy

Strengthen **relationships** among state leaders, school systems, practitioners, community groups and others to **contribute to SEL policy development** and **build demand** for those policies

SEL in districts & CMOs

Apply a **user-centered approach** to build **networks** of school systems working together on SEL implementation strategies



Teacher practice focused on SEL

Give teachers **time and space** to **learn about SEL integration from one another**, both in person and through digital tools



Innovation in the service of practice: Lift up the practical classroom applications of new ideas

Funder investments in SEL

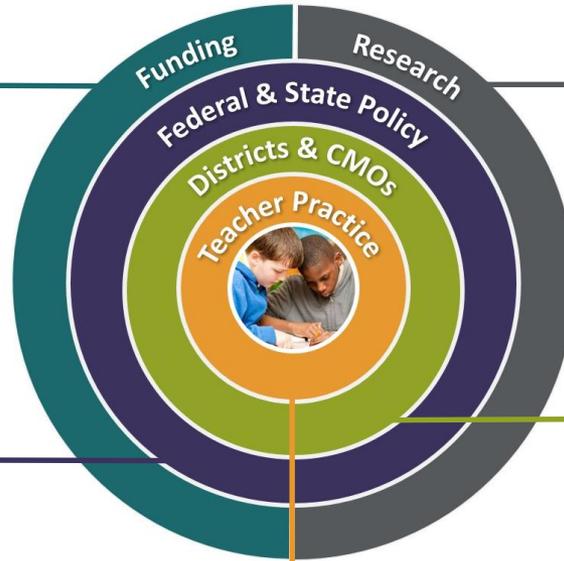
Fund the **testing of new SEL integration approaches** that have high potential **value to practitioners** and (pending initial success) invest in **scale**

Research on SEL

Address how practitioners might use **research findings** to make **feasible and sustainable changes** to their implementation of SEL

SEL in federal & state policy

Create **opportunities for teachers, principals and students** to give regular **feedback** on and **contribute** to SEL policies based on their experiences



SEL in districts & CMOs

Facilitate the sharing of ideas **from the school level up to the central office** to inform the development of SEL resources and tools system-wide

Teacher practice focused on SEL

Help teachers strengthen their own **adult SEL skills** so they are in a better position to teach and model these skills for students

Appendix

Interviews

Districts & CMOs

- Richard Fournier, Director of District Partnerships, **Transforming Education** (national)
- Noah Bookman, Chief Strategy Officer, **CORE Districts** (California)
- Khizer Husain, Chief of Staff, **Two Rivers Public Charter School** (Washington, DC)
- Jennifer Kubista, Director of Student Life, **Tacoma Public Schools**
- Christian Ruiz, School Leadership, **Dallas Independent School District**
- Carl Christopher, Senior Consultant, **Education First** (working with **Battle Creek Public Schools** in Battle Creek, MI)

Funders

- Kathleen Traphagen, Senior Consultant, The Learning Agenda (on behalf of **Grantmakers for Thriving Youth**)

Teacher practice

- Jane Ehrenfeld, Executive Director, and Jessica Hiltabidel, Director of Teaching and Learning, **Center for Inspired Teaching**
- Kanya Balakrishna, Co-Founder and President, **The Future Project**
- Ellen Moir, Founder and CEO, **New Teacher Center**
- Nancy Madden, President and CEO, and Robert Slavin, Co-Founder and Chairman of the Board, **Success for All Foundation**
- Keith Hefner, Executive Director, and David Heller, Education Director, **Youth Communication**
- Megan Marcus, Founder and CEO, **FueIED**
- Jane Quinn, Vice President and Director of National Center for Community Schools, **The Children's Aid Society**
- Masa Uzicanin, Founder and Executive Director, **Sevenzo**

Research

- Chad Rubalcaba, Consultant, **Education First** (working with a community of practice of personalized learning funders)

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