

# K–12 Social and Emotional Learning Across Connecticut

A Statewide Landscape Scan | Fall 2021



Connecticut State Department of Education

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## Executive Summary

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This report, based on a survey described below, provides eight recommendations for supporting students in developing social and emotional learning (SEL). The recommendations include strategies that district and school personnel can incorporate into their district and school strategic planning and school improvement plans to address the need for SEL supports. Collectively, the recommendations offer a coherent, systemic approach to plan for and communicate to school- and district-based practitioners, leaders, and professionals the importance of SEL and ensure that SEL becomes and remains fundamental in kindergarten through grade 12 (K–12) public education.

Although not a comprehensive list, the recommendations correspond to the findings of the statewide landscape scan of Connecticut public school districts and follow-up practitioner focus groups, conducted during fall 2020. The survey scan findings and responses from the focus groups provided a snapshot of the work that is taking place, current trends, emerging issues, and programmatic initiatives related to SEL in K–12 public schools across the state. The first two recommendations are strategies for meaningful family and community engagement in supporting SEL. The third, fourth, and fifth recommendations offer guidance for strategic planning and funding opportunities for the systemic integration of SEL and academic instruction. Systemwide professional learning is the focus of recommendation six, which includes ancillary staff to support students' SEL development beyond the school day. The seventh recommendation emphasizes the use of an assessment to monitor students' development of SEL competencies and to guide SEL supports and efforts at the district and school level. The final recommendation provides guidance for responding to increased demand for SEL support due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Summary of Findings and Key Recommendations

- 1. District Efforts to Address SEL:** While nearly all districts reported that they address SEL for students through ongoing districtwide engagement efforts, four out of 10 districts do not publicly display information about SEL on their website. *To make SEL efforts truly effective, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) recommends that districts provide detailed information about SEL initiatives and programming on district websites as one way to provide information to families and communities.*
- 2. SEL Integration:** Districts report that they are committed to SEL, but they need information on SEL principles, a common language for SEL, and guidance on integrating SEL into academic instruction. *CSDE recommends that SEL be included in board policies and strategic operating plans so that resources are allocated toward developing a systems approach to SEL.*
- 3. SEL Resources and Support:** Most districts report that they have at least a part-time or full-time equivalent (FTE) devoted to SEL. SEL is primarily funded through local budget allocations and is less often funded through state or federal grants. *CSDE recommends that all districts that receive federal title funds (e.g., Title I, Title II, and Title IV, Part A and the temporary Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief [ESSER] funds) to use these resources to support SEL activities and SEL-related professional development, as appropriate. Connecticut also requires all districts to have a districtwide school climate coordinator (Connecticut General Assembly, Public Act 11-232).*
- 4. SEL Activities for Staff and Students:** Districts report that they have a variety of activities that support student SEL and strengthen the social and emotional competencies of the adults who support them. Nearly all districts report having free-standing lessons designed to explicitly enhance students' social and emotional competencies and at least one support for adult SEL. *CSDE recommends that activities related to student SEL, a positive school climate, and adult SEL be part of a tier 1 (universal) tier of a multitiered systems approach designed to help achieve a positive school climate. CSDE also recommends instituting an ongoing program that supports adult SEL and psychological well-being, perhaps through partnerships with local community mental health agencies.*

5. **Professional Development:** Districts report that they are providing professional learning related to SEL; however, they also report that the trainings are not always tailored to the needs of participants. *CSDE recommends a systematic approach to professional learning that is driven by needs and informed by districts' SEL goals and outcomes for students and adults. Paraeducators and noninstructional staff such as school resource officers, bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria staff should also receive SEL training so they are better prepared to reinforce classroom SEL instruction.*
6. **Use of Data and Needs Assessment:** Few districts report that they are using SEL needs assessments to guide their implementation. *CSDE provides, at no cost to districts and schools, the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) and the DESSA-mini screening tools, both strength-based assessments of students' SEL competencies.*

CSDE recommends that districts use the [School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation \(SHAPE\)](#) to drive SEL efforts. The SHAPE is a free resource that collects information and provides a snapshot of the multitiered services and supports, staffing, financing, and data systems of school and district comprehensive school mental health systems.

7. **SEL Priorities and the COVID-19 Pandemic:** Most districts report significant changes in their SEL programming due to COVID. Many districts are requesting support and guidance on how to execute strategies in a coordinated fashion. *CSDE recommends that districts use existing title funds and the federal ESSER funds to support SEL work. The CSDE's [AccelerateCT](#) document cites SEL as one of the priority areas. Additional information is available in the [SEL section](#) and [COVID-19 Resources for Families and Educators](#) pages of the CSDE website.*



## Introduction

All students deserve high-quality, engaging, and comprehensive instruction that addresses their social, emotional, and academic needs in a safe, supportive, and equitable environment. The list of beneficial outcomes from implementing social and emotional learning (SEL) is extensive and well-researched. Students experience improved academic performance and success, better social relationships, improved decision-making and problem-solving skills, and a better understanding of self and postsecondary options; relationships between school staff and families are enhanced; and administrators and other school faculty benefit from a safer and more positive school climate that is conducive to a healthy learning environment.

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) conducted a statewide landscape survey scan of Connecticut public schools, along with follow-up focus groups, during fall 2020. The purpose of the scan and the subsequent focus groups was to provide the CSDE with a snapshot of the work taking place regarding current trends, emerging issues, and programmatic initiatives related to SEL in K–12 public schools across the state. CSDE encouraged all public school districts to participate in the survey scan. SEL is the *process*

*through which young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities; manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals; feel and show empathy for others; establish and maintain supportive relationships; and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL 2020).*

Students learn best through relationships that make them feel safe and nurtured and support positive psychosocial behavioral outcomes (Weissberg, 2011). Prioritizing support for students' social and emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs is vital, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated existing pressures and conditions. Developing trusting relationships between families, students, and educators is essential to improving students' emotional wellness. SEL integration is vital in all aspects of K–12 schooling, contributing to whole-child success across students' life spans ([Connecticut State Board of Education, Position Statement on Social, Emotional and Intellectual Habits for All Students K–3](#)). Connecticut public schools have amplified their attention to SEL work for students and adults as a way to foster positive school experiences.



## Respondents

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Of the 200 districts invited to participate in the survey, 124 (62 percent) responded. Thirteen respondents declined participation after the first three questions, leaving 111 respondents remaining (55.5 percent response rate). Twenty-five of the 30 Alliance Districts and all 10 Opportunity Districts completed the survey.

As suggested by CSDE, most districts convened and engaged teams to complete the scan. A director, coordinator, or supervisor was listed as a member of the respondent team for over half of the responses (59.5 percent). For most districts, a superintendent or assistant superintendent was listed as a member of the respondent team (55.9 percent). A principal or assistant principal was included as a member of the respondent team for over one-third of the responses (38.7 percent).

### Survey Design

The survey scan included 24 questions that addressed districtwide and school-based SEL efforts; the degree of SEL integration into the district's infrastructure (mission, strategic plans, and policies); priority activities; resources directed to SEL implementation and professional development; and the measurement and assessment of SEL. The scan also captured SEL-related priorities stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The survey scan was divided into seven areas: (1) District Efforts to Address SEL, (2) SEL Integration, (3) SEL Resources and Support, (4) SEL Activities for Staff and Students, (5) Professional Development, (6) Use of Data and Needs Assessment, and (7) SEL Priorities and the COVID-19 Pandemic. These scan areas and the survey questions are addressed in more detail throughout the report. The appendix contains a full description of the survey instrument and a detailed description of responses.

### Focus Groups

Following administration of the survey scan, CSDE convened four focus groups composed of superintendents, principals, school counselors, and teachers. The representatives provided more in-depth insight and contextualized information about SEL activities, needs, and issues across the state. The focus group protocol addressed questions related to Connecticut's [Components of Social, Emotional, and Intellectual Habits: Kindergarten through Grade 3](#) (SEIH: K–3), strategies, supports, and resources that support fidelity of implementation, needs and challenges of equity-based SEL implementation, and concerns specifically related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Focus groups were conducted virtually via Zoom for no more than 60 minutes. Conversations focused on the following four prompts:

- How the SEIH: K–3 are used across the district.
- Resources and strategies for effective SEL implementation.
- Addressing needs and systemic barriers to SEL implementation.
- Concerns specifically related to the pandemic.

### Methodology

A research team from the Region 2 Comprehensive Center (R2CC) and the Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands (REL-NEI) analyzed the results. Frequencies for quantitative responses from the survey scan were generated using IBM SPSS statistics (v. 25). The survey scan also included quantitative questions with an optional qualitative, open-ended component that allowed respondents the opportunity to provide further information about their district's activities. Where possible, responses to these open-ended questions were grouped into categories that emerged from the data. After these categories were determined, the frequency of responses that fell into each category was tabulated.

To analyze focus group responses, the research team from R2CC and REL-NEI organized relevant comments and quotes in each set of focus group notes into four key areas: SEIH use; resources and strategies for effective SEL implementation; needs for, and barriers to, SEL implementation; and concerns specifically related to the pandemic. The research team then reviewed the comments and quotes in each of the key areas to identify common themes.

The qualitative and quantitative methodologies strengthen and substantiate the survey findings, which are summarized by focus areas, with questions listed below.

## Survey Results

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### District Efforts to Address SEL

- *Is there a districtwide effort to address SEL for students?*
- *Is information about the districtwide efforts to address SEL publicly available?*

Connecticut school districts address SEL for students through ongoing districtwide engagement. Only four districts of the 111 respondents (3.6 percent) indicated no districtwide effort to address SEL. Of these four districts, three reported that individual schools organized and implemented their own SEL efforts. Although most of the responding districts (59.5 percent) publicly post information about districtwide SEL efforts, just over 40 percent do not provide information to the public about their SEL efforts.

**Recommendation:** To make SEL efforts truly effective, it is important to enlist the support of families and the community. CSDE recommends that all districts provide detailed information on their websites regarding SEL efforts and aspects of the SEL curriculum or framework that families can use at home to reinforce the practices and principles learned at school. Similarly, providing specific SEL information to community members who interact with school-age youth, via the district website or other means, can help reinforce the importance of SEL by using the same components that students are using at school.

### SEL Integration

- *Is SEL named as part of your district's mission?*
- *Has your district developed or adopted SEL standards?*
- *Are you using the CSDE publication *Components of Social, Emotional, and Intellectual Habits: Kindergarten through Grade 3* as a planning tool?*
- *Is SEL a district expectation for promoting a positive school climate?*
- *Is SEL included in the district's strategic operating plan and/or improvement plan goals?*
- *Has your district's board of education adopted policies that promote SEL?*
- *What standards do you use for which grade levels 4–12? (open-ended response)*
- *Does your district have a formal definition of SEL? (open-ended response)*

The SEL Integration section consisted of questions related to the inclusion of SEL in districts' board policies, mission statements, strategic plans, and operating plans; the districts' definitions of SEL; the use of SEL standards; the use of Connecticut's [SEIH: K–3](#); and the districts' expectations for promoting a positive school climate.

Nearly all responding districts indicated that they have an expectation for promoting a positive school climate, and over 75 percent of districts responded that SEL is included in the district's strategic plan or improvement plan. Just over half of the districts (55.5 percent) responded that SEL is part of the district's mission. About 40 percent of districts responded that they are using SEL standards (39.6 percent), most of which are using the five competencies outlined in the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Many districts use the CSDE [SEIH: K–3](#) as a planning tool, and 45 percent of responding districts reported that the local board of education policies promote SEL.



**Table 1. Implementation of SEL into District Mission, Standards, and Expectations**

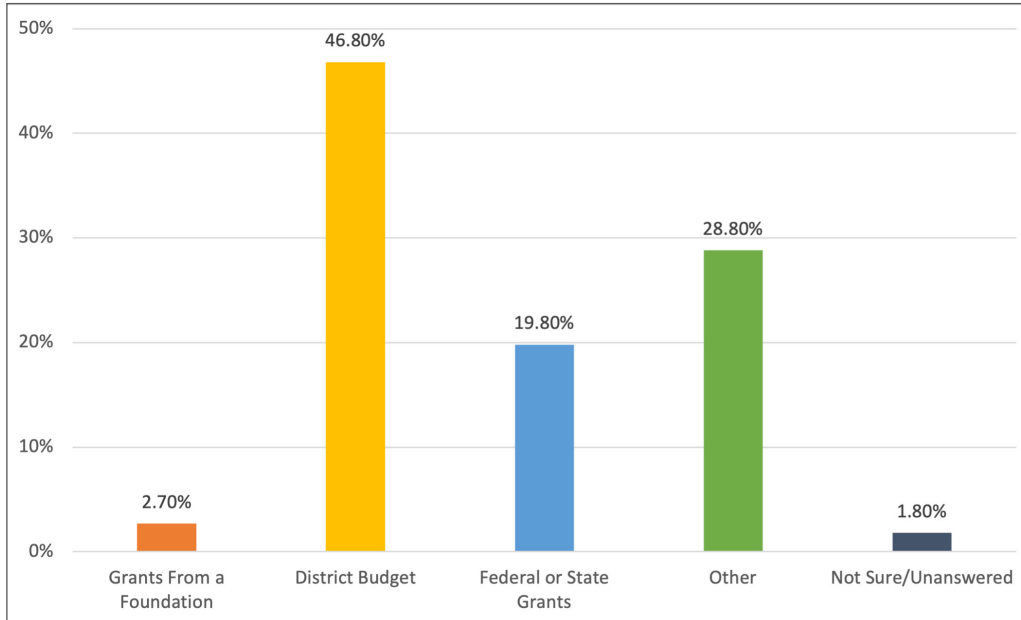
	Yes	No	Not sure/ Unanswered
SEL is a district expectation for promoting a positive school climate.	97.3%	.9%	1.8%
SEL is included in the district's strategic operating plan and/or improvement goals.	75.7%	20.7%	4.6%
SEL is part of the district's mission.	55.0%	39.6%	5.4%
District's board of education has adopted policies that promote SEL.	45%	18%	11.7%
District is using SEIH: K-3 as a planning tool.	43.2%	46.8%	9.9%
District has developed or adopted SEL standards.	39.6%	47.7%	12.6%

**Recommendation:** CSDE recommends that board policies include SEL and that districts develop or adopt SEL standards and formally add SEL to the district's mission to improve SEL integration and reinforce its importance with staff, families, students, and the community. The CSDE is currently working on *Components of Social, Emotional, and Intellectual Habits: Grades 4–12* and along with the K–3 components will provide statewide SEL standards. This document will be available in the fall of the 2021–22 school year.

### SEL Resources and Supports

- *If your district has specific staff members assigned to SEL, at what total level of effort (in terms of FTEs) across all personnel?*
- *How is your district resourcing SEL-related work?*

Seventy-five percent of the districts report having at least a part-time staff devoted to SEL. Districts report that SEL efforts are funded in a variety of ways, primarily through local budget allocations and an undefined "other." However, fewer than 20 percent of districts report using state or federal grants to fund SEL activities (see figure 1).

**Figure 1. Resources Used to Fund SEL Efforts**

**Recommendation:** The CSDE recommends that all districts that receive federal title funds use Title I, Title II, and Title IV, Part A to fund SEL activities and SEL-related professional development. For small districts, adding SEL to the portfolio of the school climate coordinator would provide oversight to SEL and further support developing and maintaining a positive school climate. In addition, districts have received federal ESSER funds (ESSER I, ESSER II, and American Rescue Plan [ARP-ESSER]). The CSDE has provided guidance through the [AccelerateCT](#) document on the use of the ESSER funds, which prioritizes SEL-related activities. Districts are encouraged to blend and braid funding from multiple sources to address SEL needs.

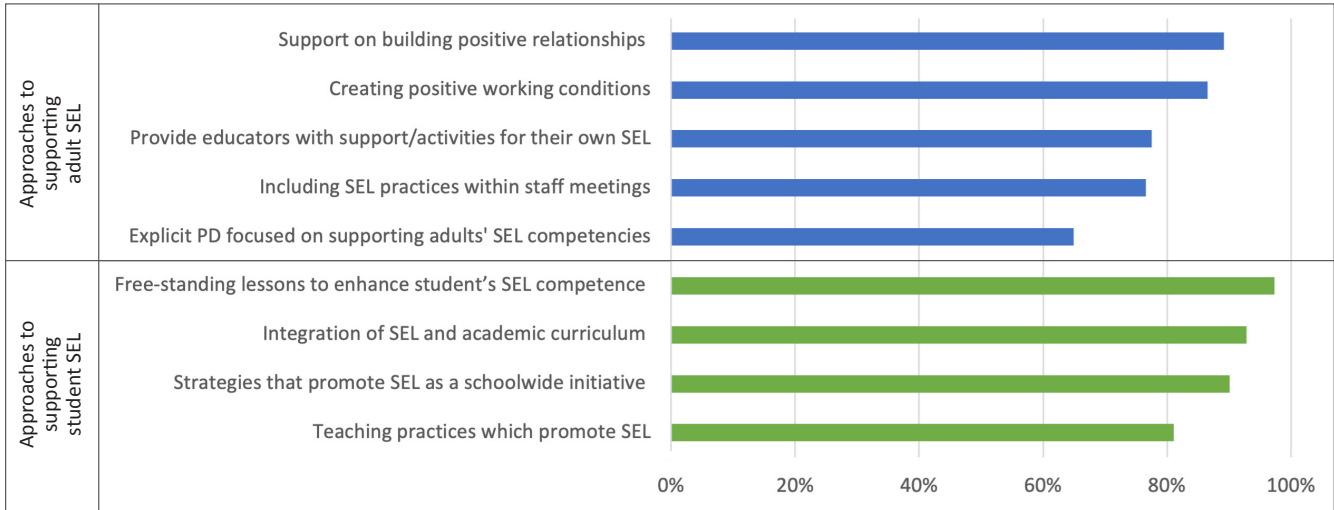
### SEL Activities for Staff and Students

- *What supports are part of your district's approach to student SEL?*
- *In addition to SEL, which of the following are part of your district's approach to promoting a positive school climate?*
- *Which supports are part of your district's approach to adult SEL?*

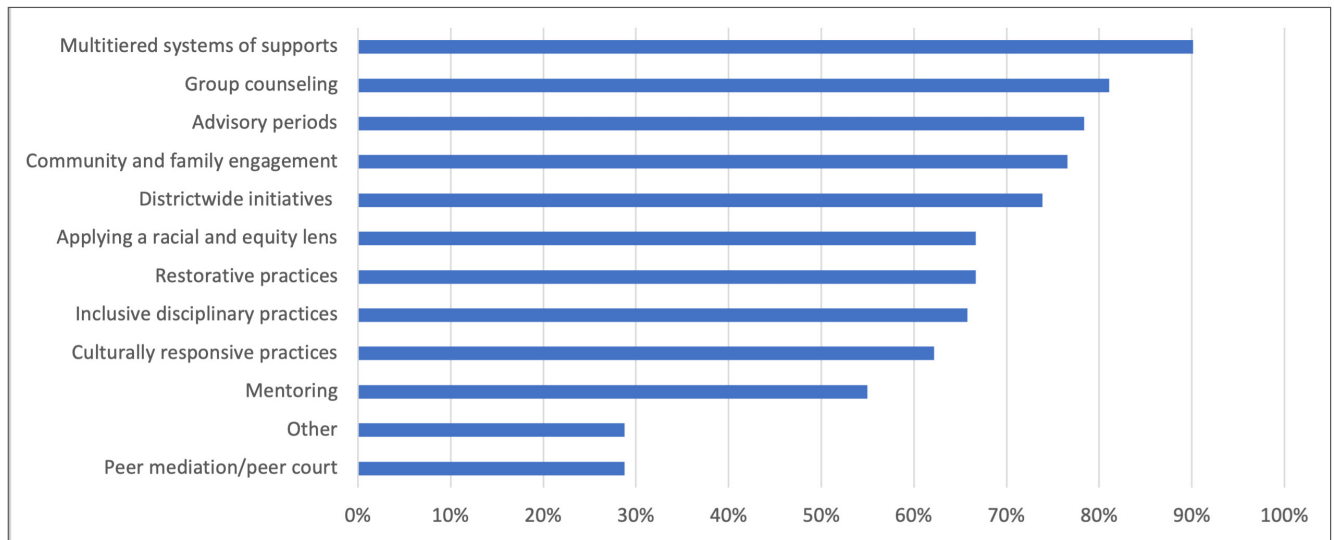
The survey asked about districts' approaches to SEL—both student and adult—and promoting a positive school climate. The responses appear on page 6 in figures 2 and 3. It is clear that districts are using a wide variety of approaches to address SEL including SEL-specific lessons, schoolwide initiatives, and SEL integration into the academic curricula.

A majority of responding districts selected each of the activities related to promoting adult SEL. As illustrated on page 6, 64.9 percent of responding districts report that they provide explicit professional development that focuses on supporting adult SEL. The vast majority of districts (between 76–89 percent) also provided indirect adult SEL supports, such as creating positive work climates and providing support on building positive relationships with others.

**Figure 2. Open-ended Responses Regarding District Approaches to Supporting a Positive School Climate**



**Figure 3. Percentage of Districts Who Use Approaches to Support a Positive School Climate**



**Recommendation:** The CSDE recognizes that districts are involved with many activities that promote student SEL, a positive school climate, and adult SEL. These practices would be more effective if systematically conducted as part of a tier 1 approach designed to improve positive school climate. Although many districts promote staff well-being, survey results show there was little training to develop adult SEL competencies provided prior to the pandemic. We recommend instituting an ongoing program of activities that promote adult SEL and psychological well-being. Partnering with local community mental health agencies or organizations is another strategy to support the well-being of the school community. Adult SEL and mental well-being is integral to meeting the SEL and mental health needs of students.

### Professional Development (PD)

- *What professional development is available through the district? (Open-ended response)*
- *Who has access to the PD?*
- *On average, how many hours of PD does the district provide to school staff on SEL per year?*

The survey posed PD-related questions, such as access to PD and the amount of SEL-related PD opportunities available. Districts are conducting PD on a wide variety of topics, some of which are directly related to SEL. In addition, district staff receive professional development on other SEL-related topics, such as restorative practices and trauma-informed practices that complement SEL approaches. The responses to an open-ended question asking districts to report on the types of SEL-related PD are listed to the right.

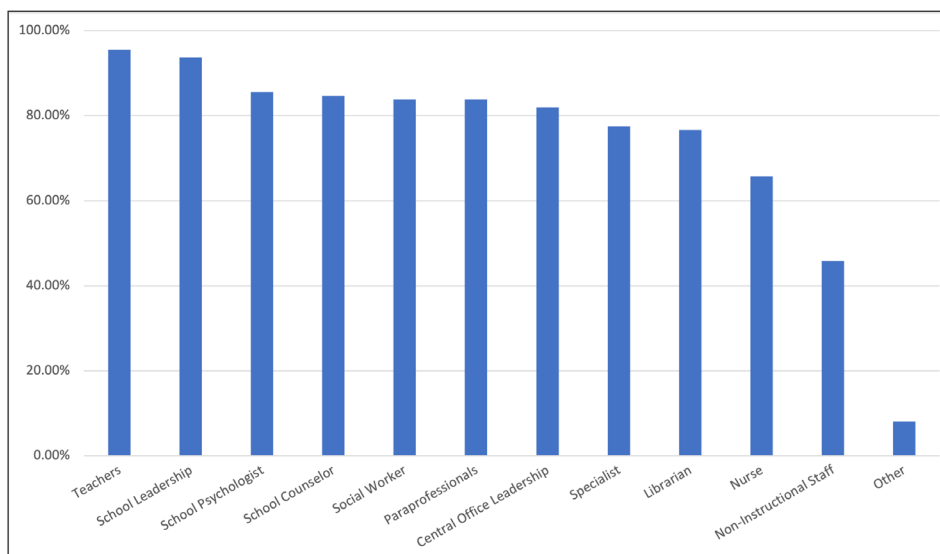
Respondents reported that teachers and school leaders had very high levels of access to PD opportunities related to SEL at 95.5 percent and 93.7 percent, respectively (see figure 4). Noninstructional staff (e.g., bus drivers, custodians, security guards, food service staff) were least likely to have access to PD opportunities related to SEL (45.9 percent). Most respondents reported that the district provides six to 10 hours of PD on SEL per year (32.4 percent), followed by one to five hours (30.6 percent). Only one respondent stated that their district provided no hours of PD on SEL per year.

#### What Professional Development is available through the district?

Districts listed a variety of professional development topics, which fell into the following categories:

- Student SEL
- Adult SEL
- Restorative practices
- Trauma-informed practices
- Mindfulness
- Equity and social justice
- Behavioral therapy
- Culturally responsive practices

**Figure 4. Percentage of Districts Reporting Access to SEL Professional Development, by Staff Role**



Note: Other includes school security guards, community partners/organizations, students, building substitutes, and districts who listed all staff or noted that access was inconsistent throughout the district.

**Recommendation:** CSDE recommends that districts use a systematic approach to PD linked to the district’s SEL goals and standards. As the *Components of Social, Emotional, and Intellectual Habits: Grades 4–12* will be completed during fall 2022, the CSDE is planning to develop a handbook to guide implementation of the SEIH Components with professional learning aimed at helping educators integrate the components into daily lessons. It is also strongly recommended that paraeducators and noninstructional staff such as bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria staff receive SEL training to reinforce students’ SEL needs and classroom-based SEL instruction.

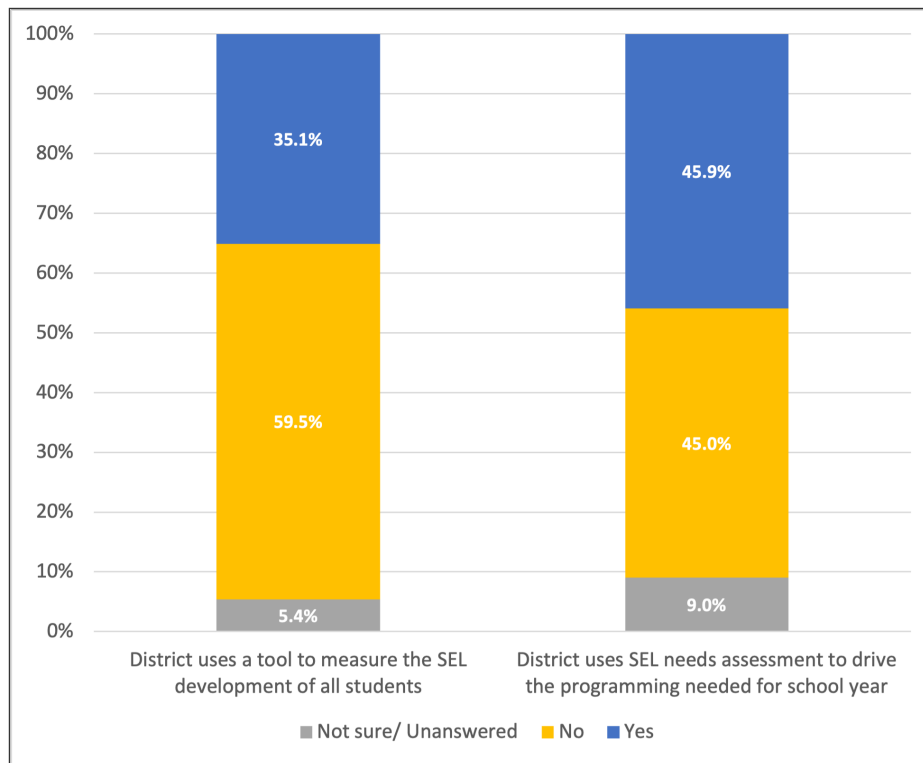
## Use of Data and Needs Assessment

- *Does your district use a tool to measure the SEL development of all students?*
- *Does your district use SEL needs assessments (students and/or schoolwide) to drive programming needed for the school year?*

The survey asked questions about how districts measure student SEL and how SEL needs assessments were used to guide SEL programming.

Most districts (59.5 percent) do not use a tool to measure the social and emotional development of their students. Of the 39 districts using a tool to measure students' SEL development, almost half (43.5 percent) used some form of survey or questionnaire. These surveys were often related to school climate, but some were SEL surveys developed by the district. The second most commonly used tools were screening tools such as the Behavior Assessment System for Children, Third Edition (BASC-3) and the DESSA.

**Figure 5. Percentage of Districts Using SEL Measurement Tools and Needs Assessments**



Districts were evenly divided in whether they did (45.9 percent) or did not (45 percent) use an SEL needs assessment to guide programming. Some districts reported using the same needs assessment tools to guide programming and to measure students' SEL competence. As such, surveys and screening tools were also commonly used by districts for this purpose. In addition, many districts also mentioned Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and school climate data as information to inform SEL programming.

**Recommendation:** The CSDE provides, at no cost to districts and schools, the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) and the DESSA-mini screening tools, both strength-based assessments of students' SEL competencies. During spring 2021, the CSDE recruited districts for participation in the fall 2021 and winter 2022 cohorts.

Additionally, the CSDE recommends districts use SHAPE to drive *systemwide* SEL efforts. [SHAPE](#) is a free, interactive online system that districts can use as a first step to assess and improve district capacity related to *mental health*.

## SEL Priorities and the COVID-19 Pandemic

- *What additional information, supports, or resources does your district need to implement SEL successfully? Please indicate your district's five most important priorities.*
- *During the period of school closures, has your district's approach to SEL changed in response to COVID-19? If yes, how have you implemented SEL during school closure?*
- *What COVID-related SEL needs does your district anticipate when schools reopen?*
- *What recommendations do you have for CSDE?*

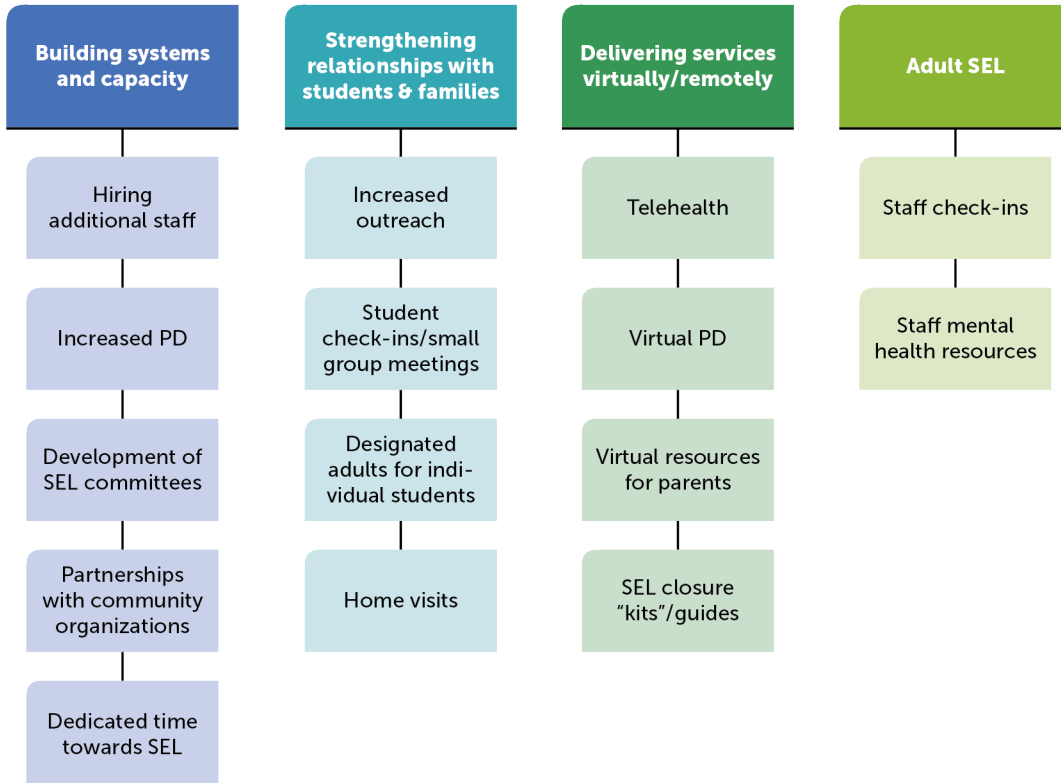
When asked about district priorities related to SEL implementation, respondents endorsed “additional funding for SEL resources” followed by “more time for adults to build their knowledge and SEL capacities.” Less frequent responses were “access to research about SEL” followed by “pre-service work on SEL at institutions of higher education” (see table 2 below).

**Table 2. Top 10 District Priorities Related to SEL**

District Priority	Percent
Additional funding for SEL resources	65.80%
More time for adults to build their knowledge and SEL capacities (e.g., time for teacher in-services)	62.20%
Strategies to integrate with academic instruction	57.70%
Crosswalk of SEL standards with academic learning standards (i.e., a tool showing how SEL integrates into academics)	56.80%
Information on equity-focused SEL content	45.00%
Access to vetted SEL resources for students	36.00%
Online modules for training on SEL	35.10%
More time during the school day for SEL (e.g., more flexibility in scheduling)	33.30%
Access to vetted SEL resources for adults (e.g., evidence-based programs)	31.50%
Additional staff members working on SEL-related topics at the district office	31.50%

Regarding shifts to SEL programming due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of respondents (85.6 percent) indicated that their district's approach to SEL had changed in response to COVID-19. Eighty-three percent of respondents provided detailed information about strategies for implementing SEL during school closures. These strategies were varied but centered around four key themes: (1) strengthening relationships with students and families, (2) building systems and capacity to implement SEL approaches, (3) providing supports for adult SEL, and (4) delivering SEL services in virtual or remote formats (see figure 6).

Figure 6. Strategies Used by Districts to Support SEL During School Closures



The pivot to remote learning, virtual PD, and telehealth were a challenge. Districts throughout the state made heroic efforts during the pandemic, and districts should be lauded for their efforts on behalf of students and educators.

**Recommendation:** Funding was most often selected as a priority item related to SEL. CSDE recommends that districts use existing federal title funds and ESSER and ARP funds to support SEL work. Furthermore, braiding federal, state, and local funds is encouraged in the grants and ARP. The CSDE’s [AccelerateCT](#) document cites SEL as one of the priority areas. Additional information and numerous resources are available in the [SEL section](#) and [COVID-19 Resources for Families and Educators](#) pages of the CSDE website.

## Focus Groups

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Focus group conversations addressed:

- How the SEIH: K–3 are used across the district
- Resources and strategies for effective SEL implementation
- Addressing needs and systemic barriers to SEL implementation
- Concerns specifically related to the pandemic

Focus group members reported a range of familiarity with the [SEIH: K–3](#). As the SEIH: K–3 focuses on the early elementary grades, educators at the middle and high school levels were less familiar with the document. When used, the information from the SEIH: K–3 is often integrated into districts' existing SEL work and approaches.

As shown in the survey results, focus group members confirmed that districts are using a variety of materials, frameworks, trainings, and programs to support SEL implementation. Approaches such as restorative practices, culturally responsive practices, and school climate initiatives inform and support SEL program delivery. Many districts and schools report that they have SEL coordinators or teams who provide support for implementation. Common themes relating to implementation strategies included garnering buy-in from stakeholders across the school community, scheduling uninterrupted time for SEL lessons, and dedicating time periods to SEL, and having supportive leadership.

Several themes emerged from the focus groups regarding needs for, and barriers to, SEL implementation. The needs and barriers most often mentioned were:

- Time for PD
- The planning and delivery of SEL
- Common SEL language across grades and content areas
- More state guidance for SEL implementation
- Adult SEL

Focus group members shared that districts need coordinated SEL efforts to address the uptick of stress arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. They discussed the impact of Black Lives Matter and the importance of meeting students' needs related to racial justice, equity, systemic bias, and culturally responsive teaching. Districts would like to see SEL resources that are equity-informed and integrate social justice. Guidance on closure and reopening transitions, as well as clarification about the status of the teacher evaluation process, may help lessen the intensity of SEL needs for professional staff.

**Recommendation:** CSDE advises districts to use equity-informed SEL resources and integrate social justice and cultural identities. CSDE promotes the concept that all educational practices, curriculum, and policies should be addressed with an equity mindset.

CSDE also recommends that districts integrate SEL into daily lessons. Time is certainly among the most precious commodities in schools. Implementing SEL well, giving the staff time to learn, plan together, and integrate SEL into daily lessons all require collaborative planning time. This will ultimately pay great dividends in a more positive school climate, better relationships, and improved academic achievement.



## Conclusion

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The CSDE would like to thank the districts and educators that responded to the SEL survey and participated in the focus groups. The information provided has proven to be a valuable resource in decision-making related to SEL. The CSDE has procured the DESSA universal, supplement and the Student Self-Report for all districts at no cost. Additionally, the CSDE is providing SEL for adults called the Educator Social-Emotional Reflection & Training (EdSERT). This is a professional development program to support the social-emotional knowledge, skill set, and wellness of educators. The SEL universal and supplemental assessments are strength-based and align to the CASEL competencies. In addition, based on districts' feedback, the CSDE is developing the *Components of Social, Emotional, and Intellectual Habits for Grades 4 through 12* (a continuation of the kindergarten through grade 3). The scan was the first step in providing a systemic collection of data to complement districts' existing efforts and in sharing best practices and successes with implementation of SEL in Connecticut schools and districts.

CSDE invites district and school teams to engage in discourse about these key themes and to further explore how these findings exist within their unique school or district context. Teams can use these conversations to pinpoint particular actions and/or efforts that align to the given recommendations or are informed by the team's new understandings. Moreover, districts can bring these recommendations forward to their stakeholders and decision-makers to explore how they can advance SEL efforts within the community.

All students deserve high-quality, engaging, and comprehensive instruction that addresses their social, emotional, and academic needs in a safe and supportive environment. The list of beneficial outcomes from implementing SEL is extensive and well-researched. Students experience improved academic performance and success, better social relationships, improved decision-making and problem-solving skills, and a better understanding of self and postsecondary options; relationships between school staff and families are enhanced; administrators and other school faculty benefit from a safer and more positive school climate that is conducive to a healthy learning environment.

Forging ahead, we need to continue to work collaboratively to evolve the science and practice of equitable SEL in the school community. All stakeholders must work in concert to make intentional efforts to ensure that SEL is embedded in districts. Amidst these unprecedented times, we need to emphasize SEL and support our students and staff to reach their fullest potential and flourish and thrive.

## References

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Weissberg, 2011.

Roger Weissberg was an author of this 2011 meta-analysis, [The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions](#).



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