



Selecting and defining what SEL approaches, practices and programs will be implemented

Activity Guide for LEAs and schools



Purpose

All initiatives rely on people creating change by doing something differently in their work or personal practices, behaviors, etc. This activity aims to help you tease out, for your set of SEL implementation activities, WHO needs to do WHAT differently.

Activity Tips and Considerations

1. This is a collaborative, conversation-based team activity.
2. This can be completed in a 1-2 hour virtual or in-person meeting with all relevant groups, though may require more time. It is important not to rush through this process as implementation is facilitated when everyone is on board with and aware of the goals of implementation from the start. **Ideally, you are seeking representation from all groups involved in SEL implementation.**
3. Identify 1-2 facilitators to guide this activity. Make sure they are very comfortable with the materials or virtual platform you are using, and with facilitating discussion.
4. Identify a notetaker to record discussion items (e.g., insights, actions).
5. It is helpful to be transparent about decision-making processes throughout the activity (i.e., “we have to reach consensus to agree to move forward with this”) and ensure that these processes incorporate various viewpoints and balanced power.
6. One of the goals of the activity is to make sure that everyone at the table has a voice. Therefore, it is very important that people can contribute in a variety of ways (e.g., by speaking up or by writing things down). One common way to do this is by incorporating independent brainstorming time into your group session and enabling people to write their thoughts anonymously on a whiteboard (virtually or in person), or by collecting opinions through a poll.
7. When you invite everyone, let them know the purpose of the meeting so they can begin to brainstorm before they arrive. Therefore, it can be helpful to have some time to think about this in advance of the meeting.



Activity Instructions

Step 1: Where are you starting from and where do you want to go?

Here, you are seeking to define your needs, gaps, vision for SEL, and capacity to get there. There are multiple ways to gather this information, for example:

- If you are a school that has already completed the CalHOPE Student Support Program School Selection Tool, then some of the information related to where you are and where you want to go is contained within that tool. You can use this to kickstart your discussion in this step.
- A great resource is the [CASEL implementation rubric](#) that you can use to hone in on areas of focus. This is a comprehensive tool that looks at both capacity for SEL implementation as well as areas of focus.

Alternatively, if you do not want to use tools but might benefit from some guiding questions that elicit similar responses, consider the questions below.

- What is your vision for SEL?
- What is your capacity to plan for implementation and to implement? How much and what type of experience do you have with these activities?
- Do you have an implementation team in place (i.e., the group of individuals who will oversee SEL implementation)?
- Is leadership supportive of SEL implementation? Is there consistency in leadership or is there significant turnover?



Activity Instructions

Step 1: Where are you starting from and where do you want to go?

How far along are you in your SEL journey? Do you already have SEL practices/programs/policies in place or are you just starting out?

- If you already have some elements of SEL in place, what are your strengths and what are your weaknesses? Are there priority areas you would want to focus on (i.e., student SEL, adult SEL, culture/climate) and how do your current strengths and weaknesses inform these?
- If you are just getting started, which priority area(s) speak to you?
- In thinking about the priority area(s) you want to focus on, what are some of the goals you want to achieve?

Step 2: Prioritizing goals

If you've already clearly selected an area of focus (i.e., student SEL, adult SEL, culture/climate), then you can skip this step. However, if your SEL area(s) of focus aren't clear or there are too many potential areas of focus, it is helpful to go through a prioritization exercise to help you come to a consensus on your SEL implementation goals. Consider an approach such as ranking or voting with dots and discuss:

- What is a good/realistic starting place for you?
- What aligns with your vision and goals?
- What are the greatest levers for change?



Activity Instructions

Step 2: Prioritizing goals (cont.)

In a ranking activity:

- Ask the group you've convened to rank the potential areas of focus.
- Collectively select the approaches that are highest ranked.
- If choosing this approach, it is also easy to anonymize.
 - If in person, you can get everyone to note their ranking on a piece of paper, jumble them up, and then review each anonymous rank.
 - If doing this virtually, you can send out a survey for everyone to complete in real time or use Zoom's poll function.

Voting with dots can also work in person or virtually:

- If in person, write out all of the approaches on different pieces of paper and assign each person a pre-determined number of 'dots' (e.g., two Post-It notes).
- Each person places their 'dots' on the two areas of focus they want to prioritize.
- The option(s) with the most dots gets selected.
- If doing this virtually, you can use Zoom's annotate function, for example, to simulate something similar.



Activity Instructions

Step 3: Select SEL approaches

Once areas of focus have collectively been decided on, you can select specific SEL approaches that align with your vision and identified areas of focus.

Examples of approaches include:

- › Designing and implementing an SEL professional learning program for school staff
- › Modelling three signature SEL practices at meetings (e.g., ending all meetings with an optimistic closure)
- › Developing structures that promote trust, community, and collective efficacy among staff
- › Addressing all students by their first names
- › Adopting and implementing PreK-12 SEL standards or guidelines
- › Aligning discipline policies and practices with SEL
- › Integrating SEL with a continuum of student supports

CASEL provides descriptions and a repository of approaches to choose from. Consult these lists for the areas of focus you prioritized. Collectively decide on what approaches would be best using the ranking or dots exercise described previously.

More information on adult SEL can be found [here](#).

More information on student SEL can be found [here](#).

More information on the CASEL program guide to evidence-based programs can be found [here](#).

Ultimately, there is no magic number of approaches you should aim to select for implementation. Select the number of approaches you would like to adopt based on the area of focus you selected and how much capacity you have to do this.



Activity Instructions

Step 4: Defining the WHO and the WHAT

All initiatives ultimately rely on people doing something differently. For each SEL approach you selected, it is critical to identify WHO (i.e., which individual or group of individuals) needs do WHAT differently. This is the step that:

- Establishes clarity early on and facilitates implementation in the long term.
- Elaborates on the magnitude of change and so can be helpful in illustrating if implementation goals need to be further refined.
- Clarifies if there are points of integration with other initiatives or possible adaptations that can be made so that the required changes are less burdensome on the people a) in charge of implementation, and b) those being asked to do something differently to implement the selected SEL approach.

When defining WHO needs to do WHAT differently, consider “who does what; to, for or with whom; when; where?”. The table below provides definitions for each of these elements.

Domains of defining the change	Definition
WHO	The individual or group of individuals who is performing the WHAT
WHAT	The behaviour that needs to be performed
Context	The setting in which the WHO does the WHAT (e.g., for a student SEL approach, an example of context is the classroom)
Beneficiary	The individual or group of individuals at the receiving end of the WHAT (e.g., for a student SEL approach, the target would be students).
Time	The time period and duration that the WHO performs the WHAT (e.g., for a student SEL approach, this might require teachers to deliver a program to students over 16 weeks, using 20 minutes of class time on a weekly basis).



Activity Instructions

Step 4: Defining the WHO and the WHAT

A worked example is provided below and a blank worksheet is provided at the end of this document. Note, for certain approaches, there may be multiple WHOs and multiple WHATs.

SEL approach: Implementing the Learning to BREATHE Program, a mindfulness-based training program designed to facilitate the development of emotion regulation and attentional skills for middle and high school students

WHO	Health education teachers
WHAT	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Attend an 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program2) Attend a 2-day in-service training3) Deliver Learning to BREATHE in class4) Complete a feedback form after delivering each session
Context	In the classroom
Beneficiary	Students
Time	Learning to Breathe will be delivered in a 45-minute lesson once per week over six weeks in each health education class, each semester



Activity Instructions

Step 5: Reflect on your next steps

At the end of this activity, you should have areas of focus, specific SEL approaches related to those areas of focus, and a defined set of WHOs and WHATs (WHO needs to do WHAT differently to implement the SEL approaches). The next stage is to understand barriers and facilitators to doing the WHATs (Module 6).



Activity Instructions

Equity considerations

Some questions you can ask the group to reflect on whether you are completing this step equitably are listed below. We encourage you to use these in addition to the foundational equity questions in the Module 3 guide.

When selecting the SEL approaches, practices or programs, are we considering:

- Contextualizing individual-level behaviors in the population that the individual exists?
- Framing the the SEL approaches, practice or programs from a more upstream perspective?
- Whether the approaches, practices or programs we selected are feasible, acceptable, useful, accessible, effective and safe for the people who are impacted by it?

When defining WHO needs to do WHAT differently, are we considering:

- The current and historical power dynamics that exist between the WHOs, and who these will be considered in implementation?
- Whether the WHATs are feasible, acceptable, useful, accessible, effective, and safe for the people who are expected to perform the WHATs?



Appendix A

Blank Worksheet

SEL approach (i.e., the thing you are adopting):				
WHO	WHAT	Context	Beneficiary	Time
WHO	WHAT	Context	Beneficiary	Time
WHO	WHAT	Context	Beneficiary	Time
WHO	WHAT	Context	Beneficiary	Time