

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

CASEL Releases New Definition of SEL: What You Need to Know

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Twenty-six years ago, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) first introduced the term "social and emotional learning (SEL)" to the education world. The SEL field has evolved tremendously since then.

This year, CASEL has released a 2020 update to the definition of SEL along with new iterations of the "CASEL 5" core competencies and "CASEL Wheel" visual framework. These updates reinforce CASEL's commitment to "an expanded vision and growing research

base for social and emotional learning" that emphasizes SEL's ability to **advance educational equity and excellence**.

As Karen Niemi, president and CEO of CASEL, said on an [October 2020 webinar](#) announcing the updates:

"As things have evolved, we have seen a lot of variability around the understanding of what constitutes 'high quality' SEL and how to implement SEL. We see the need to offer clarity around what is necessary to achieve the vision for SEL... for educators, for adults, and for young people everywhere, particularly those who have historically been marginalized."

Below, we've summarized the updates to CASEL's definitions of social-emotional learning (SEL). Learn what changed, why it matters, and what it means for your school or district.

What Is CASEL's Updated Definition of Social and Emotional Learning?

Per CASEL's press release, the new definition of social and emotional learning is as follows:

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

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

A Reintroduction to SEL: CASEL's Definition and F...



Watch the webinar: "A Reintroduction to SEL: CASEL's Definition and Framework" (Oct. 2020)

What Changed in the Definition?

CASEL's updates to the definition for SEL align with how social and emotional learning is being implemented and practiced in schools and districts today. The new definition more clearly outlines the role of social-emotional learning in promoting equity in education.

It also emphasizes student agency while acknowledging that the context and environment in which students live cannot be dissociated from their academic, social, and emotional development.

What is Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)?

[2020 Update]

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development.

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



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



Exploring the new definition in full, here are the key additions:

- Explicitly states how SEL can **advance educational equity and excellence**.

- Elevates **identity, agency, and belonging** as critical pillars of SEL.
- Acknowledges the positive impact that SEL can have on **building just communities** through **collective goal setting** and making **caring decisions**.
- Emphasizes how **environments, relationships, and broader contexts** (e.g., societal realities, individual realities, socioeconomic status, family dynamics, cultural background, access to opportunities, and experiences in schools) **shape learning and development**.

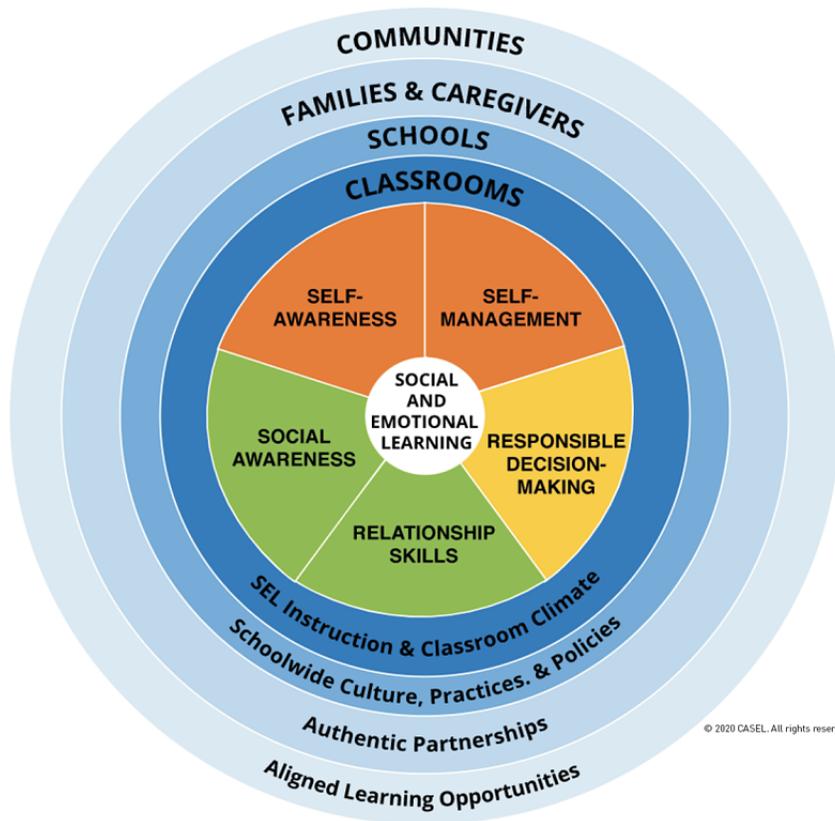
The second paragraph, in particular, offers a more holistic view of where and how SEL occurs. This broadened scope allows for a more explicit inclusion of areas like family engagement, adult SEL, social justice, cultural competence, curriculum and instruction, continuous improvement, and equity.

Updates to the 5 Core Competencies and the CASEL Wheel

In addition to the new definition of social and emotional learning, CASEL has updated its SEL Framework (the “CASEL Wheel”) and its definitions for the five core competencies (the “CASEL 5”). Here's what changed.

The CASEL Wheel

The new version of the “CASEL Wheel” includes the same five



competencies (Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making).

Now, four “key settings” wrap around the competencies:

Communities, Families and Caregivers, Schools, and Classrooms.

In doing so, CASEL advocates for a systemic approach to SEL—practices, programs, and policies across classrooms, schools, families, and communities *all* influence students' learning and development. If supports are coordinated and working in harmony, this can promote student voice and agency, create supportive school climates, foster family engagement, and build student and adult social-emotional learning.

The CASEL 5: Core Competencies

Adjustments to the definitions of the “CASEL 5” emphasize the importance of embedding SEL into academic curriculum and of

reviewing school-wide practices and policies to create equitable learning environments. Here are the five competencies and their updated definitions.

Competency	(New) Definition
Self-awareness	<p>The abilities to understand one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.</p> <p>This includes capacities to recognize one’s strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose.</p>
Self-management	<p>The abilities to manage one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.</p> <p>This includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation and agency to accomplish personal and collective goals.</p>
	<p>The abilities to understand the perspectives of and</p>

wareness

empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

This includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

ship Skills

The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.

This includes the capacities to communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, work collaboratively to problem solve and negotiate conflict constructively, navigate settings with differing social and cultural demands and opportunities, provide leadership, and seek or offer help when needed.

ecision-Making

The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.

This includes the capacities to consider ethical standards and safety concerns, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being.

Why Are These New Definitions Relevant to the 2020-21 School Year?

If we had to name one takeaway from CASEL's update to the definition of social-emotional learning, it's this: **SEL and equity are interwoven**. Any conversation about social-emotional learning is also a conversation about equity.

As Rob Jagers, vice president of research at CASEL, said on the ["Reintroduction to Social-Emotional Learning"](#) webinar:

"While SEL alone will not solve longstanding and deep-seated inequities in the education system, it can create the conditions needed for individuals and schools to examine and interrupt inequitable policies and practices, create more inclusive learning environments, and reveal and nurture the interests and assets of all individuals."

As we enter the 2020-21 academic year, district leaders and educators are responding to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic while our nation is reckoning with a renewed focus on systemic racism and racial equity.

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leadership requires reimagining the way in which we address unconscious biases in schools, foster social-emotional learning, and tend to student and staff members' mental health and

emotional well-being. Integrating SEL skills into educational experiences with a focus on equity is more important than ever before.

According to Dr. Lorenzo Moore, executive director of social emotional learning and culture at Aldine Independent School District (TX), **"If you are talking about social-emotional learning but not equity, you are not talking about SEL.** One practical way to do this is to infuse equity and social-emotional learning competencies in school-wide procedures. When you consider how you deal with misbehavior, SEL and equity should be at the heart of any policy so that we can move away from punitive measures and shift to restorative practices."

Read: How senior district leaders at D.C Public Schools, Portland Public Schools (OR), and Aldine ISD are addressing SEL and equity.

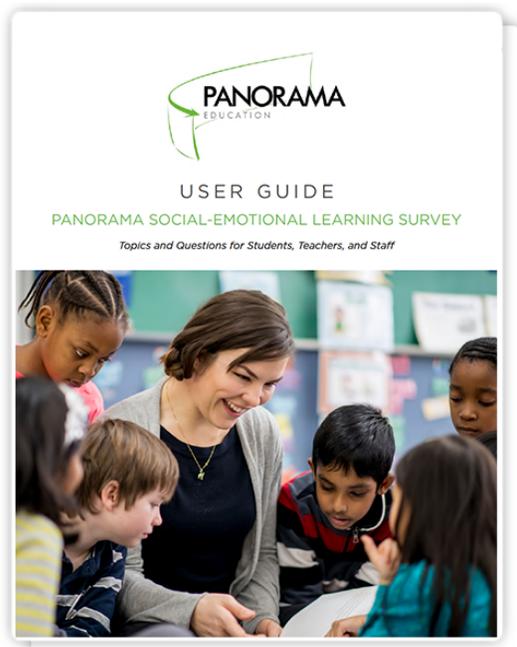
What Do These Changes Mean for SEL Measurement and Assessment?

In CASEL's Districtwide SEL Framework—which outlines four focus areas to help districts and schools achieve systemic SEL—**Focus Area 4** remains **"Practice Continuous Improvement."** Within this area, CASEL advises districts to "collect and reflect on data, address challenges, and build upon successes to continuously improve SEL implementation."

Measuring student and adult SEL through surveys is one way to practice continuous improvement. **In selecting a survey**

instrument and interpreting SEL perception data, it is essential to:

- Consider how situational or systemic forces, such as racism and racial bias, shape students' lives.
- Recognize that students' social-emotional growth is the shared responsibility of students, educators, families, and their broader communities.
- Measure not just students' skills and competencies, but also the social, cultural, and educational variables that support student growth.
- Identify an SEL measurement provider that matches this expanded view of social-emotional learning.



Panorama for Social-Emotional Learning helps schools and districts measure and take action on SEL data from students and adults. Our CASEL-aligned survey offers 30+ topics on social-emotional learning skills, competencies, well-being, and equity and inclusion in school.

CASEL partner districts use Panorama survey data as a formative tool to identify social-emotional strengths and areas of need, integrate SEL into school improvement plans, differentiate supports for children, and address adult SEL. The Panorama platform makes it easy to explore survey results and take action on

the data using strategies from our [SEL curriculum partners](#).

[Download the open-source Panorama Social-Emotional Learning Survey.](#)

Explore Additional Resources

- [Watch a recording of CASEL's webinar: "A \(Re\)introduction to SEL"](#)
- [Read about CASEL's new definition of social and emotional learning](#)
- [Download the Panorama Social-Emotional Learning Survey](#)
- [Learn about Panorama's alignment to CASEL's Districtwide SEL Framework](#)
- [Explore an interactive version of the "CASEL Wheel"](#)
- [Browse Panorama's SEL Curriculum Partners](#)

[Get in touch with us to learn how Panorama can support your district with CASEL-aligned SEL measurement this year.](#)

FEATURED RESOURCE

Panorama Social-Emotional Learning Survey

Learn how to measure students' social-emotional learning skills and competencies in our complete SEL Survey user guide.

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