

School Climate and Culture * Social Emotional Learning

*The following is from the work of Dr. Amy McKart, SWIFT Education Center

School Climate

School climate reflects how members of the school community experience the school, including interpersonal relationships, teacher and other staff practices, and organizational arrangements. School climate includes factors that serve as conditions for learning and that support physical and emotional safety, connection and support, and engagement.¹

A positive school climate includes a focus on physical safety, supporting students and staff to realize high academic and behavioral standards because other issues are out of the way, and encouraging and maintaining respectful, trusting, and caring relationships for the whole school community.²

In the last 30 years, a growing body of research has confirmed the importance of the learning climate for students. Compelling empirical research shows that a positive and sustained school climate promotes students' academic achievement and healthy development. Not surprisingly, a positive school climate also promotes teacher retention, which itself enhances student success.³

1 U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students. (2016). Quick guide on making school climate improvements. Washington, DC, 1

2 Yoder, N., Darling-Churchill, K., Colombi, G. D., Ruddy, S., Neiman, S., Chagnon, E., & Mayo, R. (2017). School climate improvement reference manual. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students.²

3.Center for Social and Emotional Education, 2007; Cohen, Pickeral & McCloskey, 2008; Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004.³

School Culture

School cultures moves us into what are the shared beliefs and actions of the individuals within the school. Culture involves either known or unknown norms, rules, traditions and expectations. Culture might include how people dress, greet each other, arrival and departures times, and is often shaped by those who have been in the school for longer periods of time.⁴

Primary Components of School Climate



Inviting Climate &
Culture



Safety

Students feel physically and emotionally safe in their schools and are able to focus on learning. Examples are Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) are in place. Facilities are safe and well-maintained.

4. Strategy Brief, February, 2016

Elisabeth Kane, Natalie Hoff, Ana Cathcart, Allie Heifner, ShirPalmon, Reece L. Peterson

Environment

Districts, schools, and classrooms are welcoming, culturally sustaining environments in which students feel accepted and supported. Elements are

1. Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices
2. Anti-Bullying
3. Respect and Fairness for All Students
4. Restorative Practices

Teaching and Learning

High-quality, evidence-based instruction, intervention and personalized learning opportunities are available for all students and students are actively engaged in their own learning. Elements are

1. MTSS
2. Universal Design to Learning
3. Personalized Learning
4. Differentiated Instruction
5. Formative assessment Practices
6. Evidence-Based and Research-Based Practices

Relationships

Students feel supported, encouraged, and appropriately challenged by caring adults, feel connected to their peers and school, and value their own health and well-being.

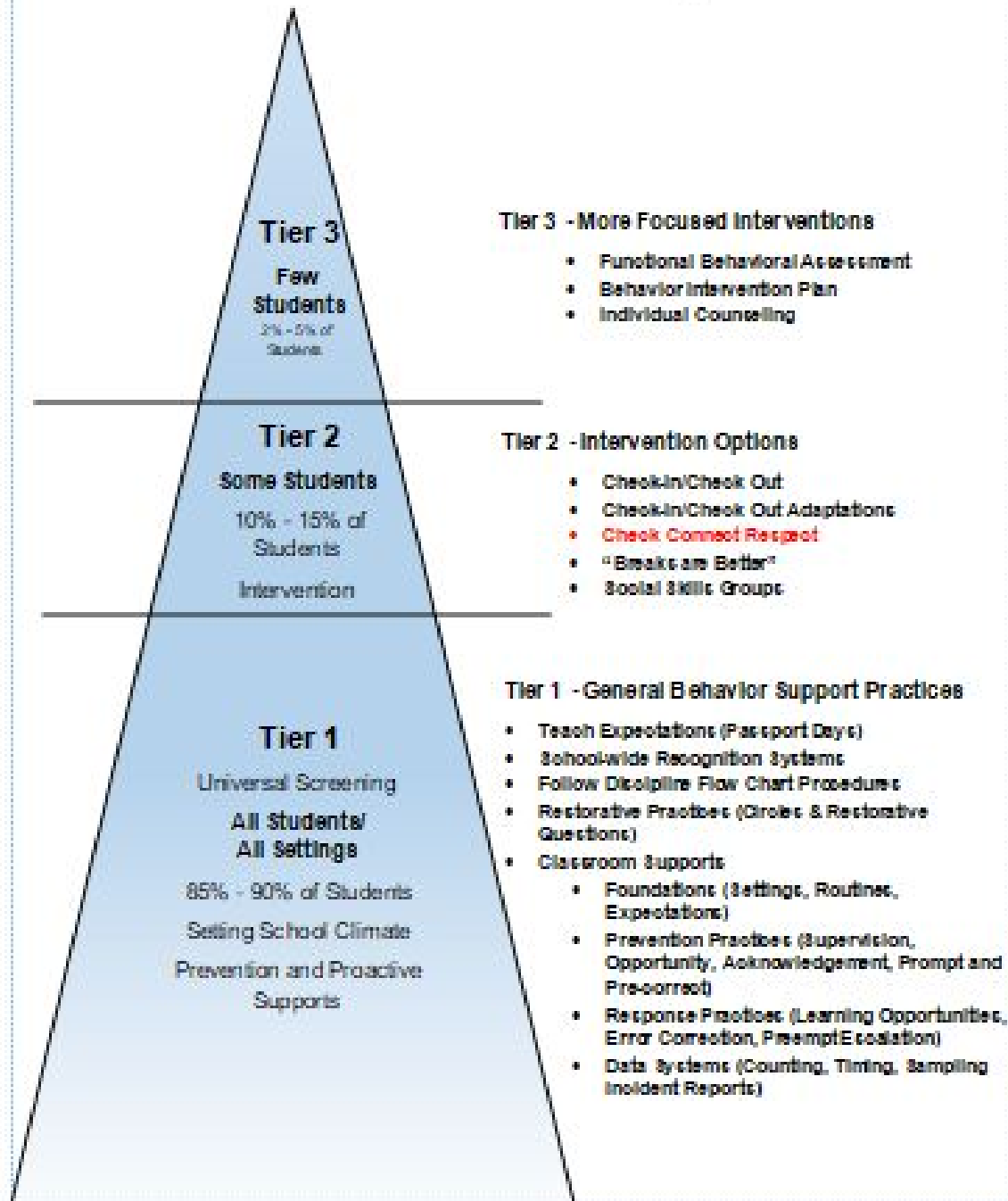
Elements are

1. Caring Adult Relationships
2. Social Emotional Learning
3. Physical, Mental and Emotional Health and Well-Being

Our MTSS Plan incorporates three tiers of support for Behavioral/Social Climate intervention. Tier 1 includes a **Universal Screening (????)**, school-wide procedures and classroom supports. Tier 2 provides interventions for approximately 10-15 percent of students. The few students (2-5 percent) who require more focused interventions are served in Tier 3. The following chart illustrates examples of activities in each tier.

Whole Child Support Process Guide

Behavioral/Social Climate Support



*The following is from the SEE Framework

Social and Emotional Learning - SEE Learning (Emory University)

SEE Learning is a curriculum that strives to teach social, emotional, and ethical competencies no differently than from how students learn math, science, or any other academic subject. Practical application is the target. The authors recognize that the true education of social, emotional and ethical competencies depends not only on the curriculum, but also on the environment in which learning takes place.

Three dimensions are at the core of SEE Learning - Awareness, Compassion, and Engagement. **Compassion**, also referred to as “Courageous Compassion” describes a stance of concern and consideration toward others that stems from, and results in greater inner strength. Compassion is demonstrated in the school’s culture and climate. How connected do people feel to one another? How do we feel and take care of ourselves? Compassion and kindness in the learning environment matter profoundly.

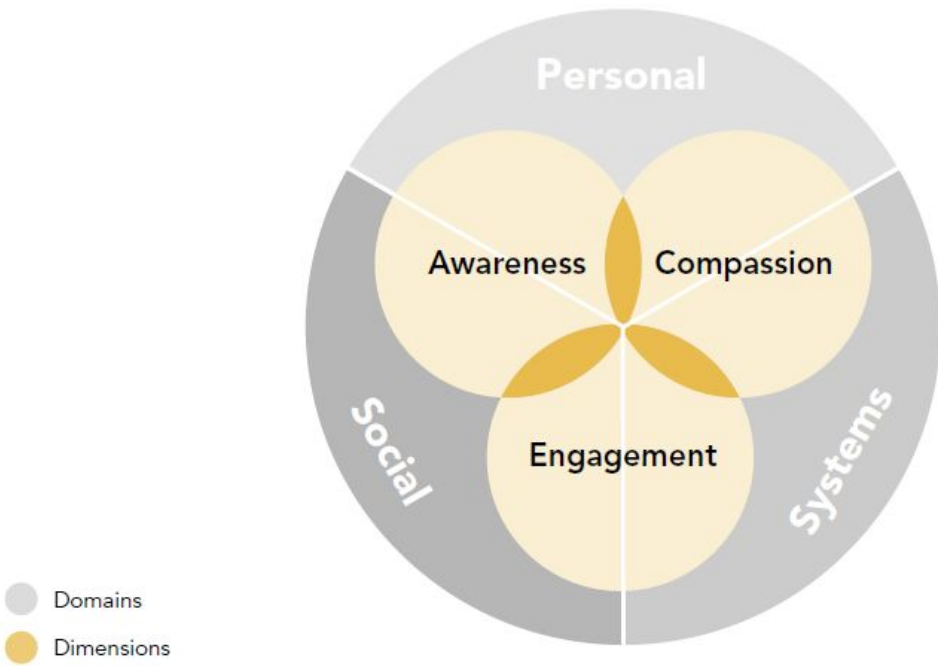
Awareness is associated with a first-person understanding of thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Interdependence as a feature of one’s own life and the systems within which one exists is critical.

The practices of personal self-regulation, being able to relate to others in the social domain, and engagement as a conscientious compassionate global citizen make up the **Engagement** dimension..

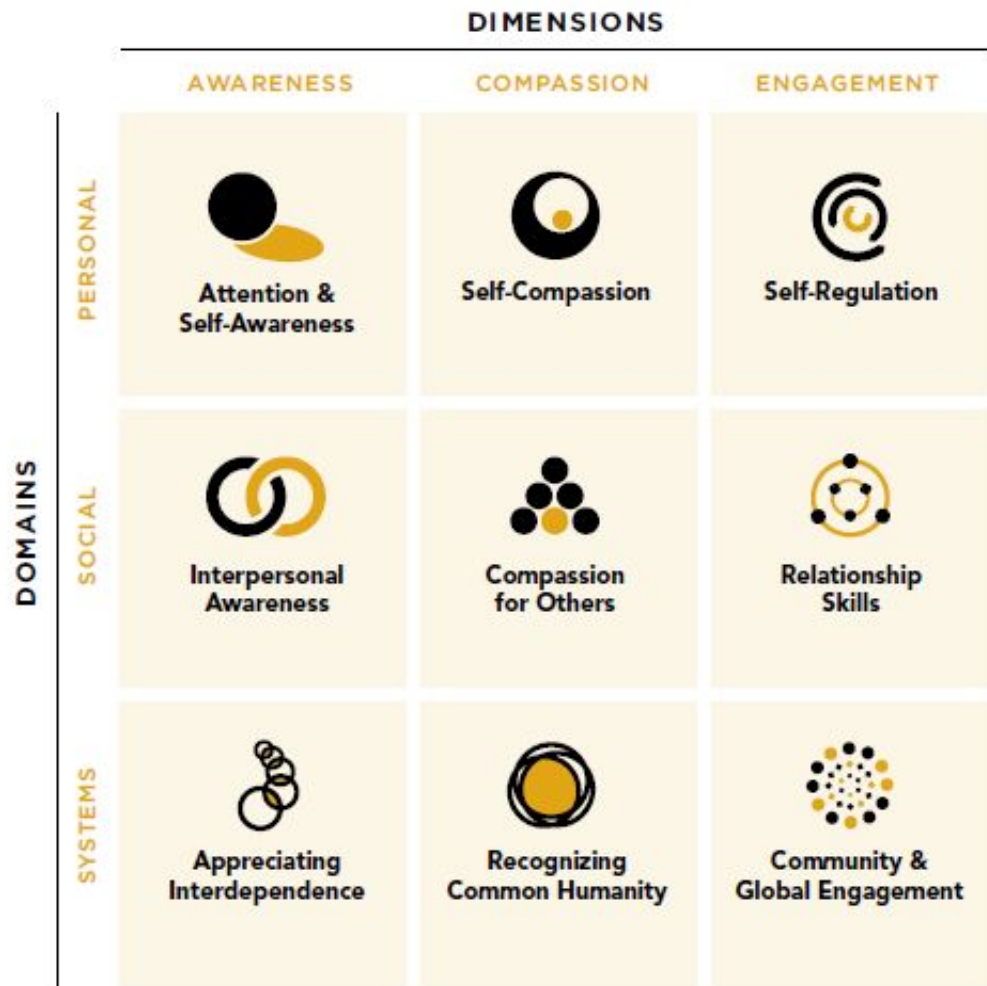
Around the three dimensions are the three domains, Personal, Social, and Systems. Again, these domains focus on self, others, and the community at large. The **Personal** domain deals with “emotional literacy,” which allows students to refrain from reactive and impulsive behavior that could harm oneself and others, while having the calmness of mind necessary to make sound decisions that are in one’s own best interests.

The **Social** domain focuses on the ability to relate well with others - targeting immediate interpersonal interactions.

And, the **Systems** domain deals with the fact that we live in a complex and global environment. We must be able to make responsible decisions based on an understanding of the interdependent systems in which we live.



Then these dimensions and domains are then placed in a matrix that results in nine components. While skills do build, it is not necessary to follow a strictly linear approach in every instance, as the focus is on building on capacities across all nine components and all are highly interrelated.



A complete curriculum is available at no cost. An online training, which consists of an overview of the program is available online. The focus of the curriculum is on exploration by students as opposed to direct instruction by the teacher. The teacher's role is often that of a facilitator rather than an instructor.

An explanation of the curriculum becomes more detailed by viewing the list of "Enduring Capabilities". These are similar to higher-order learning outcomes. They specify what students should be able to do better as they progress through the program.

Component: **Attention and Self-Awareness**

1 Attending to Our Body and Sensations

Notice and describe sensations in the body, and understand how they relate to stress and well-being.

2 Attending to Emotions

Attend to and identify one's emotions in type and intensity as they arise.

3 Map of the Mind

Categorize emotions in relation to one's own experience and to existing emotion models.



Component: **Self-Compassion**

1 Understanding Emotions in Context

Understand how emotions arise within the context of underlying needs, perceptions, attitudes, and situations.

2 Self-Acceptance

Accept oneself and one's emotions by understanding their context, allowing for a relaxation of self-judgment.



Component: **Interpersonal Awareness**

1 Attending to Our Social Reality

Recognize our inherently social nature and attend to the presence of others and the roles they play in our lives.

2 Attending to Our Shared Reality with Others

Appreciate what we share with others on a fundamental level, such as wanting to experience happiness and avoid hardships, having emotions and body states, and other common experiences.

3 Appreciating Diversity and Difference

Appreciate that part of our shared reality is the diversity, uniqueness, and difference of individuals and groups, learning to respect those differences and the way they add to our collective life.



Component: **Compassion for Others**

1 Understanding Others' Feelings and Emotions in Context

Understand others' feelings and reactions in relation to the situations in which they occur, and understand that, like oneself, others have feelings caused by needs.

2 Appreciating and Cultivating Kindness and Compassion

Value the benefits of kindness and compassion and purposefully nourish them as a disposition.

3 Appreciating and Cultivating Other Ethical Dispositions

Value and foster development of ethical dispositions and prosocial emotions such as forgiveness, patience, contentment, generosity, and humility.



Component: Relationship Skills

- 1 Empathic Listening**
Listen attentively with the purpose of more fully understanding others and their needs.
- 2 Skillful Communication**
Communicate compassionately in a way that empowers self and others.
- 3 Helping Others**
Offer help to others according to their needs and proportionate to one's ability.
- 4 Conflict Transformation**
Respond constructively to conflict and facilitate collaboration, reconciliation, and peaceful relations.



Component: Appreciating Interdependence

- 1 Understanding Interdependent Systems**
Comprehend the interrelated nature of our world and the methods of systems thinking.
- 2 Individuals within a Systems Context**
Recognize how all individuals exist within a systems context, and how they affect and are affected by that context.



Component: Recognizing Common Humanity

- 1 Appreciating the Fundamental Equality of All**
Extend the realization of fundamental equality and common humanity to those outside one's immediate community and ultimately to the world.
- 2 Appreciating How Systems Affect Well-Being**
Recognize how systems can promote or compromise well-being on cultural and structural levels, such as by promoting positive values or perpetuating problematic beliefs and inequities.



Component: Community and Global Engagement

- 1 Exploring One's Potential for Effecting Positive Change in Community and World**
Recognize one's own capacity to individually or collaboratively effect positive change based on one's abilities and opportunities.
- 2 Engaging in Communal and Global Solutions**
Explore and reflect on creative and collaborative solutions to issues affecting one's community or the world.



*The following is from The CASEL Guide to Social Emotional Learning, <https://schoolguide.casel.org/>.

Social and Emotional Learning - CASEL

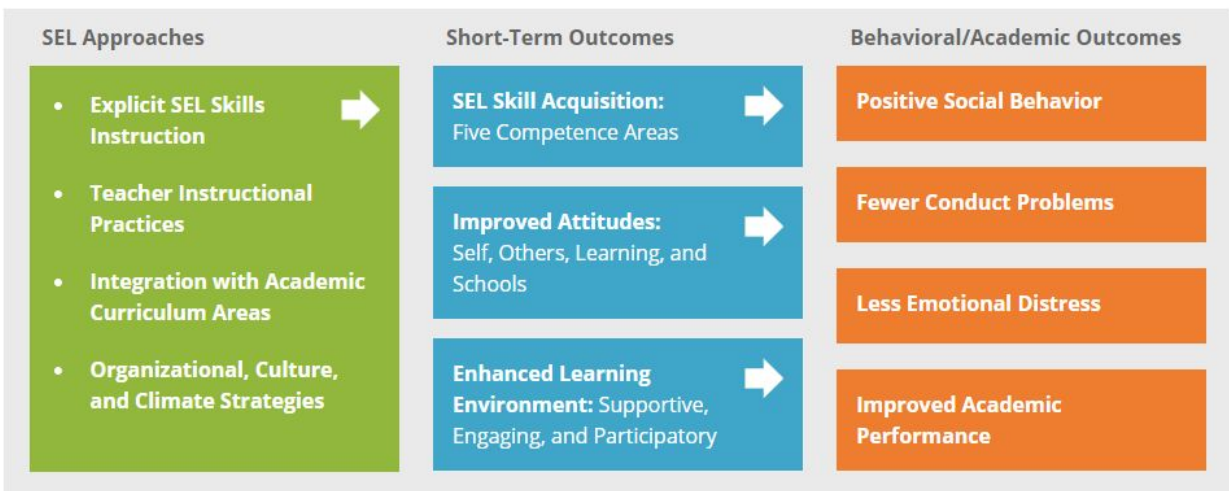
According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions. CASEL's framework identifies five core competencies



Self-awareness refers to knowing your strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism and a “growth mindset”. **Self-management** means effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating yourself to set and achieve goals. **Social awareness** is understanding the perspectives of others and empathizing with them, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. **Relationship skills** are the ability to communicate clearly, to listen well, to cooperate with others, to resist inappropriate social pressure, to negotiate conflict constructively, and to seek and offer help when needed. **Responsible decision-making** is defined as

making constructive choices about personal behavior and having social interactions based on ethical standards, safety and social norms.

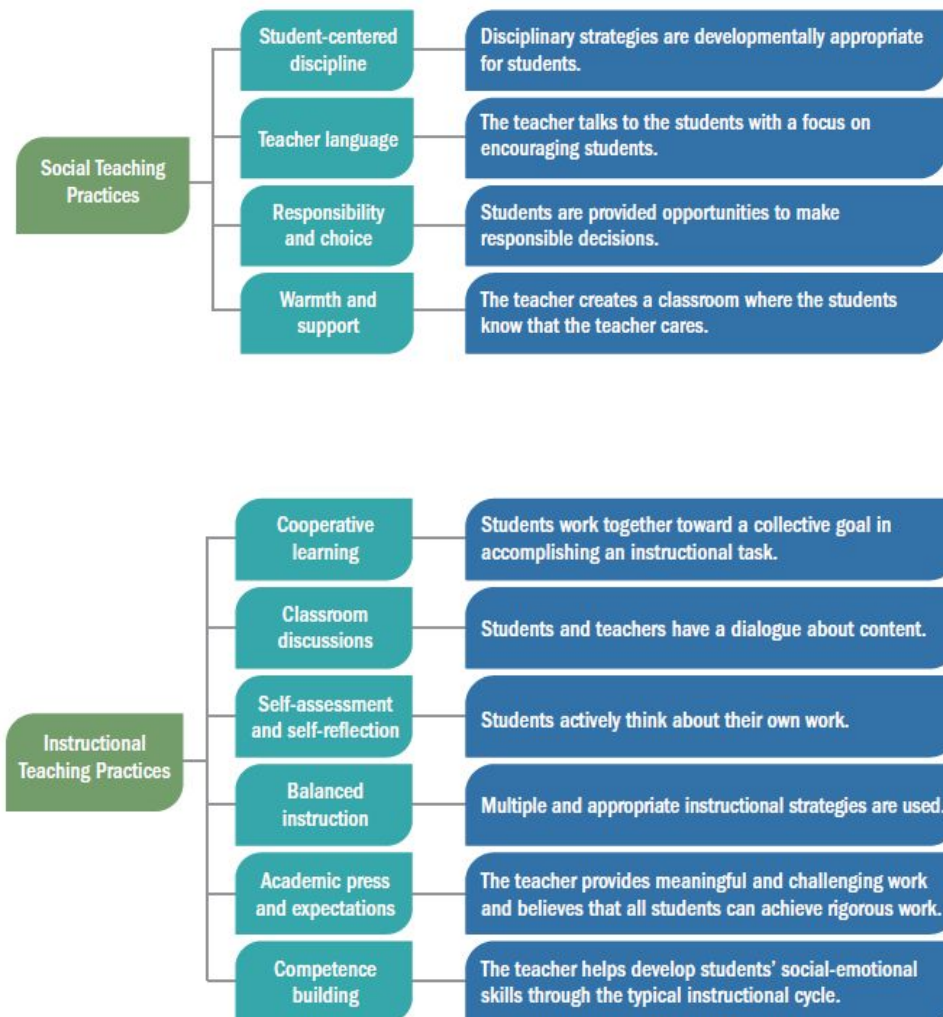
Best practices for implementation of SEL strategies, according to CASEL, include (1) Build Awareness, Commitment, and Ownership, (2) Create a Plan, (3) Strengthen Adult SEL, (4) Promote SEL for Students, and (5) Practice Continuous Improvement. Once approaches are in place, CASEL shares that outcomes include positive social behavior, fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress and improved academic performance.



Frey, Fisher, and Smith ([All Learning is Social and Emotional](#), 2019) state, “In order to reduce suspensions and expulsions, schools must help students develop the social and emotional skills that will allow them to engage positively with one another, with their teachers, and with their learning.”

At the bottom of the CASEL website (<https://schoolguide.casel.org/>), the Schoolwide SEL Process presents links for Building Awareness, Commitment and Ownership, Creating a Plan, Strengthening Adult SEL, Promoting SEL for Students, and Practicing Continuous Improvement.

Another valuable document is the CASEL Social and Emotional Learning Coaching Toolkit. This is linked from our OUSD MTSS References page. In this toolkit, you will find interesting and useful information such as “Teaching Practices that support SEL”. An illustration is below.



Another useful tool is CASEL’s list/rubric of 10 Teaching Practices that Support Social Emotional Learning. The first teaching practice is illustrated below.

	SEL practice is not yet present in the classroom.	SEL practice is minimally present in the classroom.	SEL practice is moderately present in the classroom.	SEL practice is fully present in the classroom.
1. STUDENT-CENTERED DISCIPLINE refers to the types of classroom management strategies teachers use in their classrooms.				
<p>Teacher practice: When fully implementing student-centered disciplinary practices, the teacher has discussions with students about classroom procedures, including incorporating student voice with the rules and procedures of the classrooms. The teacher provides students strategies so that they can monitor and regulate their behavior and emotions in the classroom. The teacher consistently implements classroom rules and consequences but also considers pupil-specific factors when trying to help students correct their behavior.</p>				
<p>Student behaviors: When the teacher fully implements student-centered disciplinary practices, students exhibit positive classroom behaviors, regulating their own behaviors and emotions in the classroom. If students do misbehave, they have tools and strategies to accept the consequences of their behavior, problem solve situations that may arise in the future, and articulate how their behavior influences the ways the classroom operates.</p>				

See the CASEL Coaching Toolkit for the entire tool. Also, you will find just this rubric/list on our Resources page (CASEL Rubric for 10 Teaching Practices that Support Social Emotional Learning).

SEE Learning is a robust curriculum ready for implementation in the classroom. CASEL offers frameworks to change the culture and environment of the school and community. They both are valuable resources.