The Case for Preschool through High School State Learning Standards for SEL

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Our purpose in this chapter is to encourage the creation of high-quality preschool through high school educational standards for social and emotional learning (SEL) across the United States. To accomplish this, we (1) briefly review the research literature on learning standards generally in order to identify key components of high-quality standards, (2) provide a general assessment of where states are in the process of developing comprehensive well-articulated learning standards for SEL and, finally, (3) make recommendations to support development of high-quality SEL standards across the country.

Social and emotional competencies are the foundation for all learning, and the national conversation about learning standards increasingly focuses on the importance of student competencies related to SEL, as well as the need for learning standards to guide instruction that supports social and emotional development. For example, the recent National Research Council (NRC) report (2012, cited in Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012), *Education for Life and Work*, recommended development of learning standards to promote three sets of competencies that are essential for success in education and work: *intrapersonal, interpersonal,* and *cognitive skills*. The term *intrapersonal skills* refers to individual abilities needed to manage the self, including flexibility and initiative. The term *interpersonal skills* refers to abilities needed to interact effectively with others, such as social skills, collaboration, leadership, communication, and conflict resolution. Cognitive skills include responsible decision making and critical thinking.

The skills in the NRC framework align with social and emotional competencies included in the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework (Head Start, 2010), which has helped to shape early learning guidelines and standards across the country. For example, in 2011, we reported that the Head Start Framework was cited in at least 48% of state early childhood standards (Dusenbury, Zadrazil, Mart, & Weissberg, 2011). Social–emotional development in the Head Start Framework includes four sets of competencies: *self-concept and self-efficacy, self-regulation, social relationships,* and *emotional and behavioral health.*

Both the NRC and the Head Start Framework skills align with the slightly more detailed framework developed by Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) collaborators. The CASEL (2012, p. 9) framework identifies five sets of SEL competencies:

> *self-awareness* (accurately recognizing one's feelings and thoughts and their influence on behaviors, accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations, and possessing a well-grounded sense of self-efficacy and optimism), *self-management* (regulating one's emotions, cognitions and behaviors, and setting and achieving personal and educational goals, persevering in addressing challenges), *social awareness* (taking the perspective of and empathizing with others, appreciating diversity, respecting others, and understanding social and ethical norms for behavior), *relationship skills* (establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships, communicating clearly, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking help when needed) and *responsible decision-making* (making constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others).

Like the NRC framework and the Head Start Framework, the CASEL framework for SEL is grounded in theory and based on extensive research (e.g., Greenberg et al., 2003; Payton et al., 2000; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998). Although all three frameworks are useful, the CASEL framework provides the most comprehensive articulation of the specific components of SEL and is the one we use as an organizing framework in this chapter.

The Importance of Learning Standards

Learning standards are statements about what students should know and be able to do as a result of educational instruction. As Chester Finn and Michael Petrelli write in their Foreword to the Thomas B. Fordham Report, *The State of State Standards—and The Common Core—in 2010* (Carmichael, Wilson, Porter-Magee, & Martino, 2010):

> Standards are the foundation upon which almost everything else rests—or should rest. They should guide state assessments and accountability systems; inform teacher preparation, licensure, and professional development; and give shape to curricula, textbooks, software programs, and more. Choose your metaphor: Standards are targets, or blueprints, or roadmaps. (p. 1)

Standards guide curriculum development and instruction by articulating specific goals and benchmarks for student learning within subject areas, grade by grade. They create uniformity and coherence in education by establishing and communicating priorities, and providing a common language and structure for instructions. When standards are taken seriously, they become the plan or blueprint for instruction, shaping and influencing what happens in the classroom. Standards tend to be taken more seriously when they are connected to assessment. In turn, this is likely to create demand and opportunities for high-quality professional development.

In the past two decades, learning standards have become the driving and organizing force in education, and are the cornerstone of the current educational reform movement (Finn, Julian, & Petrilli, 2006). By 1998, almost all states had developed learning standards for math and English language arts (ELA). Unfortunately, these standards were not uniform or standardized, and researchers and educational scholars noted that the quality of standards across the United States continued to be variable. Based on their important reviews of state learning standards, Finn and colleagues (2006) observed that learning standards were weak in many states because they were vague, overly focused on knowledge rather than skills, and not sufficiently rigorous.

The *State of the State Standards 2006* report by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation presented several analyses linking high-quality standards in academic subject areas to student achievement measured on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The authors concluded:

> From 1998 to 2005, only seven states made statistically significant progress in the percentage of their students reaching proficiency in

fourth-grade reading, and just six states made such progress for their poor or minority students. All of these states except for one received at least a "C" from Fordham for their English/Language Arts standards. That's not iron-clad proof that good standards boost achievement, but it seems to indicate that really bad standards make it much less likely. Still, lots of states received a "C" or higher from us but did not make progress on NAEP. So having decent standards could be considered "necessary but not sufficient." (Finn et al., 2006, p. 14)

Because academic learning depends on SEL, it is important for SEL be a part of learning standards. An extensive body of research, including a meta-analysis of 213 studies, has shown that academic outcomes are enhanced when education supports the development of SEL (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

Across the country, states have the authority to develop their own learning standards, and school districts typically have some flexibility when adopting their local standards as long as they comply with the state's overall goals. In order to assist states and districts in the process of developing standards, various educational organizations have developed national model standards for different areas of the curriculum. To improve the quality of learning standards for math and ELA nationwide, states recently came together to develop the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2012). The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were designed largely to replace participating states' own standards in math and ELA. This important effort to ensure high-quality instruction in ELA and math nationwide was coordinated by the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices.

The CCSS are designed to present clear and consistent statements about what students should know and be able to do. Development of these standards was a response to observed variability in students' performance on high school "exit" tests across states, and concerns about global competitiveness. To respond to these concerns, the CCSS identified key skills that students need to succeed academically, and developed common goals and objectives for education across states that would prepare students to compete effectively in the global future. The

CCSS also provided a common set of criteria for assessing students. The CCSS have been described as possibly "the most far-reaching experiment in American educational history" (Hacker & Dreifus, 2013).

Key features of the CCSS are their consistency and relevance to today's world. They are also grounded in evidence that includes a focus on skills development, and are developmentally and sequentially designed to prepare students for college and careers (Achieve, 2010a, 2010b). Sequence of instruction is important because research has shown that effective programs in SEL are developmentally appropriate and sequential, developing basic skills first, as the foundation for later, more advanced skills that are taught over time (Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998).

As of November 2014, 43 states, the District of Columbia, and four territories had adopted the CCSS. Because there is recognition of the unique characteristics and situation of each state, states have some flexibility in making the CCSS their own, and are permitted to incorporate up to 15% of their own standards into the Common Core. We discuss the relationship between the Common Core, and social and emotional competencies, in greater detail below, under our discussion of SEL.

Characteristics of High-Quality Standards

An important analysis of learning standards has been provided by Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow (2006) in their review of early childhood guidelines. Indeed, this review has helped shape preschool standards across the country. The work of these authors is instructive in understanding the key elements of effective standards in general. For example, Scott-Little and colleagues suggest that learning standards should be used to develop goals and benchmarks that are developmentally appropriate for children at different grade levels. They also stress that effective learning standards should be culturally and linguistically sensitive for diverse students and recommend that teachers be given guidelines on how to support development of each standard. Furthermore, they emphasize that standards documents should

describe characteristics of the environment that can support child development, and include guidelines for creating a positive learning environment. Finally, they suggest that standards documents and companion resources should be available to support and ensure high-quality implementation of evidence-based programs, including high-quality professional development and assessment tools teachers can use to develop goals and support students in meaningful ways.

Similar recommendations from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2002) and the Alliance for Early Success (Tout, Halle, Daily, Albertson-Junkans, & Moodie, 2013) assert that early childhood education and standards should be informed by an understanding of child development, as well as the individual child, and the culture and context in which the child lives. NAEYC personnel have observed that effective teachers are intentional, and they set goals and provide experiences for children that are challenging and achievable. Drawing heavily on the findings and recommendations of Finn and colleagues (2006), Scott-Little and colleagues (2006), the NAEYC (2002), the Alliance for Early Success (Tout et al., 2013), and the CCSS, we summarize key features of high-quality SEL learning standards in Table 35.1.

In the next section we use the criteria summarized in Table 35.1 to assess where states are in their process of developing high-quality SEL standards. We begin with a review of preschool standards, then K–12 standards because preschool standards and K–12 standards tend to be developed independently and are managed by separate agencies within each state. We then conclude with recommendations for developing SEL standards that contain the key features of high-quality standards.

Assessment of State Learning Standards for SEL

Preschool Standards

Before discussing specific sources, it is important to note that different terminology is used across state and national documents (e.g., terms such as *guidelines, standards,*

TABLE 35.1. Components of High-Quality SEL Standards

Freestanding SEL standards and documents supporting these standards should . . .

1. Be created for every grade level, preschool through high school.

2. Be integrated, as appropriate, into standards for other subject areas.

3. Provide simple, clear, and concise statements about what students should know and be able to do in each of the following areas: (a) self-awareness, (b) self-management, (c) social awareness, (d) relationship skills, and (e) responsible decision making.

4. Lead to goals and benchmarks that are developmentally appropriate for the age of children at different grades.

5. Be culturally sensitive, and linguistically relevant to diverse groups of students.

6. Include companion guidelines for how teachers and other adults can support development of each standard.

7. Describe characteristics of the environment that can support SEL, and include guidelines for creating a positive environment or climate to support SEL development.

8. Be available to support and ensure high-quality implementation, including evidence-based programs, high-quality professional development, and assessment tools that teachers can use to develop goals and support students in meaningful ways.

Note. These components of high-quality standards are based on findings and recommendations of Finn et al. (2006), Scott-Little et al. (2006), the NAEYC (2002), the Alliance for Early Success (Tout et al., 2013), and the CCSS Initiative (2012).

foundations, or *frameworks* have all been used). Although the terminology in different states has varied, we use the term *standards* to refer to broad statements and goals about what students should know and be able to do, and the terms *indicators* or *benchmarks* to refer to specific behaviors and skills one might expect to see at specific ages.

An extensive body of research has demonstrated the importance of high-quality preschool education to ensure school readi-

ness (e.g., Barnett & Masse, 2007; Karoly & Bigelow, 2005; Schweinhart et al., 2005; Yoshikawa et al., 2013). In the past 10 years, in large part thanks to the example of the Head Start Framework, the efforts of organizations such as the NAEYC, the Early Learning and Development Standards website (see Early Learning Guidelines/Early Learning Development Standards [ELG/ELDS], 2013), and work by researchers (e.g., Scott-Little et al., 2006), states began developing learning standards for preschool.

In our most recent scan of state learning standards for SEL (Dusenbury et al., 2013), we found that, as of February 2013, 49 states had a free-standing set of preschool standards for SEL. Forty-five states (90%) actually used the words *social* and *emotional* in the title for what we would call their SEL domain. This was up from 40 states in the scan we completed 2 years earlier (Dusenbury et al., 2011)—a 10% increase. In 2013, the remaining five states used the words *social* and *personal*, or similar language in their title for this development domain.

In our 2013 scan, we found that preschool standards often contain many features of high-quality standards identified in Table 35.1. Specifically, we found that approximately 90% of states provided (1) student indicators for SEL, (2) guidance on how caregivers could support development for SEL, and/or (3) guidance for creating a positive learning environment. Furthermore, on average, nine out of 10 states provided guidelines on how to make instruction culturally relevant, and eight out of 10 provided guidelines on how to make instruction linguistically appropriate. Nevertheless, similar to the work of Scott-Little and colleagues (2006), there was wide variability in how states did each of these things. Ideally, one might hope to find specific statements about what teachers might do to address each specific standard. For example, one standard in the *Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines* is that children "cooperate with other children, share and take turns." Next to that statement, there is the suggestion for caregivers to "model fair ways to take turns and share." There was variability in not only how many but also how states provided guidelines for teachers for this and other topics (e.g., creating a positive learning environment, cultural and

linguistic sensitivity). For example, states might provide a separate section in their document to address one or more of these topics, or they might include brief statements about the importance of one or more of these topics in general introductory material to the standards or in externally linked documents.

Similar to Scott-Little and colleagues (2006), in 2013, we found that there was also wide variability in the number and clarity of SEL standards each state provides, and in the range of age levels covered by preschool standard statements. For example, Alabama has a total of 16 standards statements in its social–emotional domain at the 4-year-old age level, while Alaska has 77 for 4-year-olds. Idaho has 113 for SEL that cover the age range from 36 to 60 months.

To illustrate the varied yet related ways states organize standards in the social and emotional domain, we present the structure of social and emotional development used by California (see California Department of Education, 2010) in Table 35.2. California organizes its social–emotional development frameworks for SEL into three broad strands: self, social interaction, and relationships. The California framework is presented in Table 35.2, as it would align with the CASEL SEL domains. It is interesting to note that the California framework focuses on four of the five domains of SEL in the CASEL framework. Indeed, it is fairly typical of states at the preschool level not to emphasize responsible decision making, perhaps because responsible decision making would be developmentally premature for preschoolers.

Overall, our scan of all 50 states in 2013 revealed that preschool standards have many strengths and serve as an excellent model for the development of well-articulated, comprehensive SEL standards for K–12. In the following section, we review K–12 standards for SEL.

Comprehensive Standards at the K–12 Level

In strong contrast to the fact that there now are freestanding preschool standards for SEL in all 50 states, it is still rare at the K–12 level to find comprehensive, freestanding standards for SEL. As of March 2013, we

TABLE 35.2. Example of How California Organizes SEL Standards at the Preschool Level

CASEL framework	Corresponding California Preschool Learning Foundations
Self-awareness	Self-awareness
Self-management	Self-regulation
Social awareness	Social and emotional understanding, empathy and caring
Relationship skills	Interactions with familiar adults, interactions with peers, group participation, cooperation and responsibility, attachments to parents, close relationships with teachers and caregivers, friendship
Responsible decision making	No clear corresponding standard

Note. Based on California Department of Education (2010).

found that states had taken four approaches to developing standards for SEL.

Freestanding, Comprehensive Standards for SEL

Illinois, Kansas, and Pennsylvania have adopted comprehensive sets of freestanding standards with developmental indicators for the entire K–12 range. (West Virginia also adopted SEL standards that contain developmental benchmarks in 2012.) Illinois was the first state to do so, in 2004, followed by Pennsylvania and Kansas in 2012. Pennsylvania adopted the same goals for K–12 SEL as Illinois, whereas Kansas adopted slightly different goals in the "Kansas Social, Emotional, and Character Development Model Standards." The SEL standards in each of these states are briefly described below.

Illinois SEL Standards. While K–12 standards for SEL were released in 2004 (see the Illinois State Board of Education, 2014c), in 2013 Illinois also released preschool standards that fully aligned SEL goals and standards at the preschool level with its K–12 SEL standards (see Illinois State Board of Education, 2013). The Illinois SEL standards include three major goals and 10 specific standards (See Table 35.3). The Illinois standards include between 90 and 149 performance descriptors for each goal at different developmental levels. For each developmental period, these performance descriptors provide examples of how students might demonstrate that they have achieved a standard, or how a teacher might

TABLE 35.3. Illinois Goals and Standards

Goal 1: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.

  A. Identify and manage one's emotions and behavior.

  B. Recognize personal qualities and external supports.

  C. Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals.

Goal 2: Use social awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

  A. Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.

  B. Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.

  C. Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.

  D. Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.

Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

  A. Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.

  B. Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations.

  C. Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community.

Note. Based on Illinois State Board of Education (2014c).

know in practice whether a student knew or was able to do what the standard statement identified. For example, for Goal 3 (Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts), the Illinois SEL standards provide 114 performance descriptors across grades 1–5 (e.g., "Explain why hitting or yelling at somebody is hurtful and unfair"), and 111 performance descriptors across grades 6–12 (e.g., "Evaluate how ethical conduct might improve valued relationships").

In addition to the goals and standards descriptors, the Illinois SEL Standards website includes many of the additional features of high-quality standards. For example, the website also provides guidelines and principles for a comprehensive system of learning supports related to three tiers of intervention (i.e., universal approaches for all students, targeted early intervention for students at risk, and intensive individualized supports for specific populations in need), guidelines for involving families and improving conditions for learning (e.g., school leadership, climate and safety; see Illinois State Board of Education, 2014a, 2014b).

Pennsylvania Student Interpersonal Skills Standards. The Pennsylvania Student Interpersonal Skills Standards were adopted April 25, 2012 (see Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2012).

These standards are designed to promote the development of skills needed to navigate the challenges of the global world effectively. The Pennsylvania Standards for Student Interpersonal Skills are organized around four developmental periods (grades PreK–K, 1–5, 6–8, and 9–12). These standards are organized around the same three goals as the Illinois standards: (1) self-awareness and self-management; (2) establishing and maintaining relationships; and (3) decision making and responsible behavior.

Kansas Social, Emotional, and Character Development Model Standards. The Kansas Social, Emotional, and Character Development Model Standards (see Kansas State Department of Education, 2014b) acknowledge the influence of CASEL, the Illinois Standards, and the Anchorage SEL Standards. Like the Illinois and Pennsylvania

standards, Kansas organizes its standards for Social, Emotional, and Character Development (SECD) under three broad goals, although the goals differ slightly and are in a different order than those in the Illinois and Pennsylvania standards. Specifically, the goals of the Kansas standards are (1) character development, which includes responsible decision making and problem solving, (2) personal development, which includes self-awareness and self-management; and (3) social development, which includes interpersonal skills. There are four developmental periods in the Kansas standards: grades K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12. Goal 1 (Character Development) focuses on ethics and good character, creating a caring community, mutual respect, and preventing cruelty and violence. Goal 1 also covers responsible decision making and problem solving, including understanding of multiple factors and goals in decision making, organizing time and managing responsibilities, playing a role in classroom management, and effective problem solving. Goal 2 (Personal Development) focuses on self-awareness and self-management across the four developmental periods. Goal 3 (Social Development) focuses on social awareness and interpersonal skills.

In addition to the SECD standards, the Kansas State Department of Education (2014a) also provides teacher instructional examples to support personal and social development.

Freestanding Standards in Other States. Three additional states have developed freestanding standards related to social and emotional development, but none of these has provided developmental benchmarks or indicators for students of different ages and each uses slightly different terminology to address SEL-related skills. Vermont's Vital Results standards address communication, reasoning and problem solving, personal development, and responsibility. Maine's Guiding Principles focus on skills such as communication and problem solving, and Missouri's Show-Me Standards emphasize gathering and analyzing information, effective communication, problem solving, and responsible decision making.

New York also deserves mention because it has many of the ancillary elements of

high-quality standards (see New York State Department of Education, 2014b), although the state has not actually adopted learning standards statements for SEL. Nevertheless, the state's website provides a number of useful resources, including strategies for supporting social and emotional development (see New York State Department of Education, (2014a), principles of a supportive environment, and guidance on implementation.

States Aligning Social and Emotional Development with Early Elementary Education

Education experts believe that there should be alignment of early childhood education with K–12 education, so that learning is consistent and supported, year to year (Tout et al., 2013). A survey by Scott-Little, Lesko, Martella, and Millburn (2007) indicated that every state is working on aligning preschool and K–12 standards, although there were many different approaches to doing this. In addition to Illinois and Pennsylvania, which have already been discussed, Idaho and Washington have aligned their preschool standards for SEL from preschool into the early elementary grades.

Idaho's aligned standards extend from birth to grade 3, and are divided into eight developmental periods (see Idaho Early Learning eGuidelines, 2014). At each developmental period, there is a social domain (Goals 27 through 35) and an emotional domain (Goals 36 through 38). Consistent with the features of high-quality standards outlined in Table 35.1, the Idaho guidelines provide child indicator statements and caregiver strategies for each standard. The Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines span nine developmental periods from birth to grade 3 (see Washington State Department of Early Learning, 2014). Within each developmental period, the Social–Emotional Domain includes relevant standards in "About Me and My Family and Culture" and "Building Relationships." There is also relevant content on "Communicating" in Speaking and Listening.

The Idaho and Washington aligned standards are important because, as can be seen in Table 35.4, in addition to aligning all learning standards through third grade, they articulate standards that address at least four of the five SEL competencies. In terms of the fifth competency, as we discussed earlier, one reason it is uncommon

TABLE 35.4. Examples of Aligned Standards for SEL

CASEL framework	Idaho Early Learning eGuidelines	Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines
Self-awareness	Belief in personal abilities, being unique individuals	Self-concept
Self-management	Adapting to diverse settings, regulating feelings and impulses	Self-management, learning to learn
Social awareness	Respecting similarities and differences in people, awareness of behavior and its effects (including effects on others), sympathy and empathy, a sense of humor	Family and culture
Relationship skills	Interacting with adults, friendships with peers, positive negotiation skills, participating in group activities	Interactions with adults, interactions with peers, social behaviors, problem solving and conflict resolution, communicating
Responsible decision making	No clear corresponding standard	No clear corresponding standard

Note. Based on Idaho Early Learning eGuidelines (2014). and Washington State Department of Early Learning (2014).

to find responsible decision-making goals articulated in early childhood standards may be that responsible decision making becomes more appropriate developmentally later in childhood. Nevertheless, some activities related to responsible decision making probably are developmentally appropriate in younger children, such as participating in discussions of why rules are important and brainstorming alternatives to hitting—two examples found in the Illinois preschool standards for SEL. It may also be that some of the student indicators included under each of the standards in Idaho and Washington could actually be conceptualized as responsible decision making. In-depth analysis of state standards is needed to explore this possibility. Standards that are aligned from early childhood through early elementary grades have begun the process of articulating social and emotional standards and indicators through early elementary school. States with aligned standards can therefore serve as a model to other states on how to conduct this process.

Freestanding Focused Standards

A third approach to standards for SEL has been to develop freestanding standards that are relevant to SEL but are not comprehensive across the range of social and emotional competencies. For example, Washington (see State of Washington, 2005) and Kansas (see Kansas State Department of Education, 2014a) each have freestanding standards for the skills of Communication, which emphasize speaking and listening skills, as well as cooperation. (The Kansas Communication Standards are separate and apart from its standards for Character Development and SEL.) Tennessee (see Tennessee Department of Education, 2014) has freestanding standards in Service–Learning for grades 9–12, which include decision making and problem solving, goal setting, developing a plan of action, demonstrating a sense of purpose, and communication.

Integration of SEL into Other Sets of Learning Standards

Virtually all states have integrated at least some degree of social and emotional content into learning standards in other subject areas. However, often this content is not comprehensive across all five SEL domains and/or it is scattered and diffuse. Furthermore, the content may not be consistent across subject areas or grade levels, and development is not systematically and strategically supported. For example, New Jersey (see State of New Jersey, 2014) and West Virginia (see West Virginia Department of Education, 2014) base their academic learning standards on 21st Century Learning Standards, which integrate social and emotional development throughout, including problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2013). 21st Century Learning skills recognize that in order to function in our increasingly complex world, students need skills related to critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration. They also need to be flexible, adaptable, able to learn independently, and respectful of people with different backgrounds. They need social skills and leadership skills, and to be highly responsible, productive, and accountable (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011).

States often use sets of national model standards such as 21st Century Learning Skills to develop their own standards, and national model standards in different subject areas often contain elements of SEL. For example, as mentioned earlier, 45 states are in the process of adopting the CCSS in math and ELA, which contain standards on communication (especially speaking and listening), cooperation skills, and problem solving. Because of the importance of the Common Core, these standards are discussed in greater detail below. National model standards in social studies, which have been used by most states to develop state standards (National Council for Social Studies, 2002), help students recognize the influence of groups and emphasize responsible decision making and good citizenship. National model standards in science (National Research Council, 1996), used by 42 states, address problem solving.

National health education standards (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1995), used by 42 states, aim to foster students' communication skills, decision-making skills, and goal-setting skills. As can be seen in Table 35.5, the National Health Education Standards are important because they overlap considerably with SEL. How-

TABLE 35.5. How National Model Health Education Standards Align with SEL Domains

CASEL SEL domain	Corresponding National Model Standards in Health
Self-awareness	No clear corresponding standard.
Self-management	Standard 6: Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting skills to enhance health. Standard 7: Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.
Social awareness	No clear corresponding standard.
Relationship skills	Standard 4: Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks. Standard 8: Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.
Responsible decision making	Standard 2: Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors. Standard 5: Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.

Note. Based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1995).

ever, health education standards are not sufficient as a blueprint for instruction in SEL, for several reasons. First, the national model health standards are not comprehensive across the SEL domains; they focus primarily and understandably on health behavior. Second, most students do not receive health education every year, from preschool through high school. Finally, time allocated for health education can be very limited, and there are often many other requirements for what is to be accomplished in health, including prevention of violence, drugs, and bullying. Because students may only have a few semesters of health, it is not sufficient to assume that health education will provide sufficient instruction in SEL.

At least seven states (Alabama, Kansas, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, and Wisconsin) have adopted the American School Counselor Association (ASCA; 2014) National Standards for Students, and these are fairly comprehensive in terms of SEL. For example, standards for career skills are highly relevant to the domain of self-awareness (e.g., "Students will understand the relationships between personal qualities, education, training, and the world of work"). Similarly, there is overlap between the ASCA Standards in Personal and Social Development and SEL (e.g., "Students will

acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect others and self" and "Students will make decisions, set goals, and take necessary actions to achieve goals"). However, ASCA standards are used primarily by guidance counselors and, like the National Model Health Education Standards, do not have sufficient influence on day-to-day instruction in education.

In conclusion, although integration into other sets of standards is one way of reinforcing SEL, our concern is that an exclusive reliance on this approach may not place sufficient emphasis on the broad application of social and emotional competencies to everyday interactions. Research has shown that regular practice is important to social and emotional development (e.g., Payton et al., 2000). When SEL standards are spread across other subject areas, they may not be emphasized, and regular practice may not occur. For these reasons, we recommend that states also adopt freestanding standards for SEL.

The Relationship between the Common Core State Standards and SEL

The vast majority of states have adopted and are beginning the process of implementing

TABLE 35.6. Examples of Overlap between SEL and the CCSS

CASEL competencies	Common Core Anchor Standard
Self-awareness	No clear corresponding standard
Self-management	Mathematical Practice: Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
	Habits of Mind: Demonstrate independence.
Social awareness	English Language Arts: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning and style, and to comprehend when reading or listening.
	Habits of Mind: Come to understand other perspectives and cultures.
Relationship skills	ELA Speaking and Listening: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing one's own clearly and persuasively.
Responsible decision making	No clear corresponding standard

Note. Based on Common Core State Standards Initiative (2012).

CCSS. It is therefore important to consider how adoption of CCSS may alter the landscape of SEL standards in math and ELA in the future. In Table 35.6, we assess whether and how Common Core Anchor Standards for math and ELA, as well as Common Core Habits of Mind, overlap with the five SEL core competencies. Table 35.6 shows where SEL competencies appear to be implicit and foundational to the CCSS. For example, the CCSS assumes that students have self-management skills, such as being able to sit quietly and focus on a task, but these assumptions are not explicit. Nevertheless, for students to be capable of managing their feelings and impulses in order to sit quietly and pay attention, they must first be aware of their own feelings and impulses—that is, they must be self-aware in order to self-manage.

Recommendations for Developing High-Quality National Standards for SEL

This is a time of great opportunity for the development of high-quality, comprehensive standards for SEL from preschool to high school. Every state has freestanding stan-

dards for social and emotional development at the preschool level, but there is work to be done in aligning those standards with K–12 education. Furthermore, only three states have developed comprehensive, freestanding standards with developmental benchmarks for K–12 SEL. However, most states do integrate standards for SEL, at least to some degree, into learning standards for other subject areas, across the full range of grade levels. Although integration of SEL standards across learning areas is beneficial, we also believe it is important to develop freestanding, comprehensive standards in order to communicate SEL as a clear priority in education. Furthermore, because it may not be efficient for states to work in isolation to develop learning standards, we recommend that educational organizations and states create a partnership to develop national model standards for SEL. To support this effort, we provide recommendations on how these can be applied to develop voluntary national model standards for SEL.

Recommendation 1. Every state should have clear, comprehensive, freestanding preschool through high school SEL standards with age-appropriate benchmarks. Academic learning depends on SEL, and

academic outcomes are enhanced when education is organized to also support the development of SEL. Research has shown that it is possible for regular classroom teachers to help their students develop social and emotional competencies through educational practice (Durlak et al., 2011). Learning standards can serve as a blueprint for providing explicit instruction to promote all five social and emotional competencies (Bond & Hauf, 2004; Devaney, O'Brien, Resnik, Keister, & Weissberg, 2006). SEL standards should include goals and benchmarks that articulate age-appropriate expectations for students at the different ages or grade spans. Because research has demonstrated that practice is an essential part of effective programming (Durlak et al., 2011), there should also be a plan for giving students extensive opportunities to practice new skills.

As a practical matter, SEL standard statements and benchmarks should be simple, clear, and of a reasonable number. Furthermore, they should focus on a single thing that students should know or be able to do. For example, rather than having one benchmark, such as "Students will be able to attend to a task and work collaboratively in a group," we recommend breaking these two ideas into two separate and specific statements to acknowledge that separate skills are necessary: for example, "Students should be able to attend to a task for at least ____ minutes" and "With support and assistance from teachers, students should be able to work collaboratively with their peers on assigned tasks for at least ____ minutes."

Recommendation 2. SEL standards should be culturally and linguistically appropriate. Effective SEL programming is relevant and appropriate to the cultural context of students (Bond & Hauf, 2004). Therefore, SEL standards should include guidelines to ensure that they are culturally and linguistically relevant. Ideally, each state would provide guidelines that honor the ethnic and cultural heritage of its students. Although many states recognize the importance of cultural and linguistic sensitivity, especially at the preschool level, we recommend that states provide specific guidance to support culturally and linguistically sensitive instruction with diverse student populations.

Recommendation 3. SEL standards should include guidelines on how to create a positive learning environment or climate. Research has shown that students need to be motivated and engaged if they are to learn and develop new skills (Greenberg et al., 2003; Payton et al., 2000; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004; Zins, Payton, Weissberg, & O'Brien, 2007). The literature on school climate and learning supports provides guidelines on what schools can do to create safe, nurturing environments (see, e.g., Adelman & Taylor, 2005; Garibaldi, Ruddy, Osher, & Kendziora, Chapter 23, this volume; National School Climate Center, 2014). Effective SEL programs build connections to school by creating caring, engaging classroom and school practices. As part of their SEL standards, states should provide specific guidelines on how to create positive learning environments that supports social and emotional development.

Recommendation 4. SEL standards should provide guidelines about teacher practices that support social and emotional development. All teachers may not intuitively know how to promote the development of social and emotional competencies. As many preschool standards already do, states should provide guidance on the specific practices teachers can use to support attainment of each standard. Ideally, the guidelines would be incorporated into teachers' professional development as well.

Recommendation 5. Standards should be linked to strategies to enhance implementation. Standards are not going to change everyday educational practices unless they are effectively implemented. Since SEL standards were introduced in Illinois in 2004, schools in that state have responded by developing plans, selecting evidence-based programs, and seeking out high-quality professional development for teachers. All 870 Illinois school districts now have policies to make SEL a part of their curriculum (Gordon, Ji, Mulhall, Shaw, & Weissberg, 2011). In contrast, because standards for SEL in Pennsylvania and Kansas were only recently adopted (in 2012), it is not yet clear how much they are being implemented. Particularly when standards are not directly tied to assessment, as is the case in all three states,

it can be difficult to determine whether and how much standards are being used by teachers to shape instruction.

It is therefore important to develop effective strategies to support implementation of SEL standards. CASEL's Collaborating District Initiative (CDI) uses a Theory of Action (see CASEL, 2013b) that identifies critical factors in successful implementation. Specifically, the CDI Theory of Action suggests that successful implementation depends on effective leadership and a professional culture that supports instruction in SEL. The CDI identifies learning standards as one of the key components of successful instruction in SEL, along with SEL assessment, evidence-based practices and programs, and high-quality professional development. Thus, implementation of SEL standards will be enhanced in three important ways: (1) adoption of evidence-based programs, (2) use of SEL assessments that allow teachers to monitor student progress, and (3) high-quality professional development. Each of these is described below.

1. *Adoption of evidence-based SEL programs.* States often resist the idea of endorsing or recommending specific programs, but there are high-quality resources that can help schools identify evidence-based programs to support SEL. Research has identified numerous effective SEL programs and curricula (Durlak et al., 2011). The most relevant tool currently available to help schools identify and select evidence-based programs in SEL is the *2013 CASEL Guide* (CASEL, 2012). The CASEL Guide identifies 23 preschool and elementary school programs that successfully promote students' self-control, relationship building, and problem solving, among other social and emotional skills. The *2013 CASEL Guide*, the first review of its kind in nearly a decade, focuses on (1) universal school-based SEL programs intended for all students (not those targeting students with special needs or preexisting challenges) and (2) school-based programs that can be delivered by existing school personnel during the regular school day. CASEL is in the process of developing a guide to middle and high school SEL programs, as well. Until the CASEL guide to secondary programs is available, seven external search tools may be useful in identifying evidence-based tools

that are relevant to SEL, although none of these focuses specifically on SEL, and users of these tools therefore need to review programs carefully to determine how thoroughly they address the SEL competencies:

- Blueprints for Violence Prevention—Model and Promising Programs (*www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints*)
- California Healthy Kids—Research Validated Programs (*www.california-healthykids.org/rvalidated*)
- IES [Institute of Education Sciences] What Works Clearinghouse (*http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc*)
- LINKS—Lifecourse Intervention to Nurture Kids Successfully (Child Trends) (*www.childtrends.org/links*)
- National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP) (*www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/index.aspx*)
- OJJDP Model Programs Guide (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention) (*www.ojjdp.gov/mpg*)
- Social Programs that Work (Coalition of Evidence-Based Policy) (*http://toptierevidence.org/wordpress*)

2. *SEL assessments.* Assessment is critical for measuring progress toward educational goals. In conjunction with SEL standards, states should recommend reliable and valid methods of assessments that teachers can easily use to monitor student progress toward achieving standards. There are resources available to help. Denham, Ji, and Hamre (2010) developed a compendium of assessment tools available to measure SEL; the compendium can be downloaded at *http://casel.org/publications/compendium-of-sel-assessment-tools*. Another important resource to help schools identify appropriate assessments for SEL is the Raikes Foundation Social–Emotional Learning Assessment Measures for Middle School Youth, which can be downloaded at *http://raikesfoundation.org/documents/seltools.pdf.* There continues to be a need for well-developed assessment tools that align with SEL standards (also see Denham, Chapter 19, this volume).

3. *Professional development for SEL.* Research has consistently and clearly demonstrated that students whose teachers imple-

ment a program with higher quality—as it is designed to be implemented—learn more and perform better on a variety of academic and behavioral outcomes than students whose teachers do not implement with high quality (Durlak et al., 2011). Training and ongoing support are critically important to ensure that teachers have a thorough understanding of standards and can implement evidence-based programs and practices effectively (see Schonert-Reichl, Hanson-Peterson, & Hymel, Chapter 27, this volume). Professional development equips teachers with the tools and resources they will need to support development of SEL. Ideally, each state should offer professional development specifically designed to support implementation of SEL standards.

Currently, there are several efforts under way to support high-quality professional development in SEL. At the national level there is proposed federal legislation (the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2013 [HR 1875], cited in CASEL, 2013a). If approved, this legislation would help to support education in SEL through high-quality professional development (the legislation can also be viewed at *http:// casel.org/policy-advocacy/federal-policy*). CASEL's CDI project is also working with eight districts across the country to develop effective strategies for professional development (see CASEL, 2013b).

Conclusion

High-quality SEL standards (1) are freestanding; (2) are integrated, as appropriate, into standards for other subject areas; (3) provide simple, clear, and concise statements about what students should know and be able to do in each of the following areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making; (4) provide goals and benchmarks that are developmentally age-appropriate for children in different grades; (5) are culturally sensitive and linguistically relevant to diverse groups of students; (6) have accompanying guidelines for how teachers and other adults can support development of each standard; (7) are associated with corresponding guidelines for creating a positive environment to support develop-

ment of SEL; and (8) identify companion resources to support and ensure high-quality implementation, including evidence-based SEL programs, SEL assessment tools, and high-quality professional development in SEL.

Developing comprehensive, quality preschool through high school standards for each of the SEL competencies in every state will be challenging. However, Illinois has already accomplished this task and can serve as a model for other states. Preschool standards can provide a good model for the development of SEL standards for later grades.

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