

Tool: Steps for Developing a Shared Vision for Schoolwide SEL

Collaborating closely with out-of-school time partners? See the [OST-enhanced version of this tool](#).

Note: This tool was created by CASEL staff based on our work with school teams. However, we encourage schools to adapt it to best meet their unique needs. Though the process can look different ways, three important components should be present:

- Gathering input from diverse stakeholders
- Synthesizing input to create a vision statement
- Sharing, getting feedback, and reworking the vision statement

Time commitment: The time needed to develop a shared vision will differ from school to school. Plan to dedicate at least one hour to steps 1-3 of the activity below.

1. Gather Stakeholders

It's recommended that schools include as many staff, families, students, out-of-school-time providers, and community partners as possible in creating a shared vision. However, it may be unrealistic to engage all these stakeholders at one time. Larger school communities may wish to hold several sessions or convene focus groups to get a wide variety of viewpoints.

Consider the following questions:

- How will you bring in diverse perspectives?
- What systems and structures does your school already have in place to hear from students, families, and community?
- What new strategies might you try?

2. Ask Individuals to Identify Their “Personal Why”

Before groups can identify their shared vision, it's helpful for each individual to consider their own beliefs about the purpose of school and their vision for young people. Ask individuals to use the following prompts to get their thoughts flowing. Participants should respond to the prompts that inspire them. No need to answer them all!

- What do you believe about students/ youth?
- Why is it important that you are a part of this community?
- What is your dream for our students/ youth?
- What does success for students / youth look like?
- What do students/ youth and adults need in order to learn and thrive?

Provide about 10 minutes for participants to write silently. If you'd like, you can ask participants to share some of their big ideas with a partner. Next, participants take about 5 minutes to formulate a personal vision statement (1-2 sentences) based on their free-writes. Alternatively, you may have participants discuss their free writes in small groups and take notes on emerging themes and recurring words or phrases.

3. Ask Small Groups to Identify Their “Shared Why”

If you had participants engage in discussion instead of creating a personal vision statement, skip the steps in the next two paragraphs and provide each group the opportunity to share out their emerging themes and recurring words or phrases.

If participants wrote personal vision statements, break the stakeholders into small groups. Ask participants to share their personal vision statements. As they share, others in the group write down key words or phrases they hear on separate sticky notes. When each participant has shared their vision statement, the team should have a pile of sticky notes with various important words or phrases.

As a group, stakeholders work together to find connected words and phrases and determine common themes. You may want to have them do this on a piece of chart paper so they can label the themes that arise.

From here, provide each group the opportunity to share out their emerging themes and re-occurring words or phrases.



The school community at Spry Elementary in Chicago, IL, break up into small groups to identify common themes

4. Incorporate Group Feedback into a Single Shared Vision

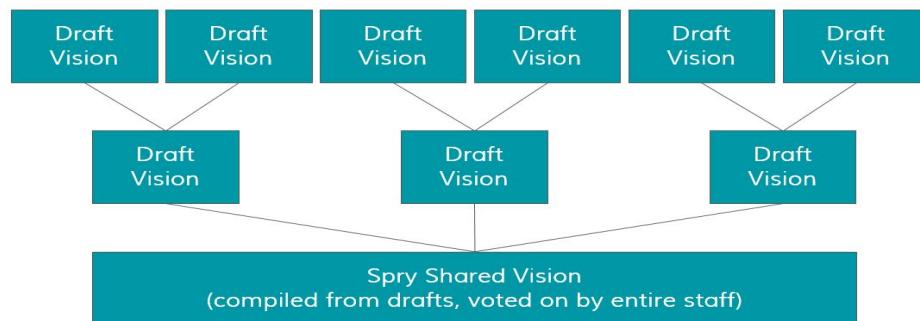
From here, there are multiple ways to build your school’s vision statement. With patience and collaboration, it’s possible to create a shared vision that captures the spirit of the entire school community. Below is one recommendation for how you might proceed:

- The SEL Leadership team uses each group’s themes to draft a shared vision that represents all stakeholder groups. This might include themes generated during multiple sessions with teachers, families, students, and communities.
- After creating a draft vision statement, share it with stakeholders for feedback. When determining how you will engage in this process, it is helpful to consider the systems and

structures your school already has in place to hear from students, families, and community. For example, you might share the draft vision statement for feedback at a parent night.

Another example of how a school community drafted a shared vision comes from Spry Elementary in Chicago. This team used a three-level consensus-building process. Once individuals engaged in preliminary guiding questions, six small groups formed and drafted shared visions. Those six groups then combined into three larger groups and merged their shared visions. Those three larger groups then finalized a shared vision for SEL, as demonstrated by the graphic below.

Spry Elementary's Process for Creating a Shared Vision for SEL



5. Make your Shared Vision Visible and Actionable

Now that you have done the work to create a shared vision, it's important to make it visible, prominent, and actionable. This will be key to sustainability. Launch the idea in creative ways that will appeal to the school and create momentum. Some practices include painting it on the entry hall wall or putting it on the school's website, letterhead, and T-shirts for field day. Refer to your shared vision for SEL frequently in:

- Staff meetings
- Internal email communications
- Communications with families and your network about new projects and initiatives
- Hiring and orienting new staff