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Heeding the Call for Change: Centering Equity in Social & Emotional Learning (SEL)

FINDINGS & STRATEGY CONSIDERATIONS

Table of contents

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1 Executive Summary

We created this deck to address a demand across the SEL field to further understand high-quality, equity-centered SEL

Why this deck

Students, families and communities confronted unprecedented difficulties related to health, the economy and racism over the last year including disproportionate impacts of COVID-19, heightened feelings of isolation and continued violence against BIPOC communities. Given these realities, we saw a **revitalized need and interest for SEL that centers equity** as well as the possibility for systemic change and innovative resource allocation.

We know that to truly center equity in SEL, **systemic and coherent policies and practices** need to be applied at every level and engage a wide range of stakeholders. **To support these efforts, we offer this resource to help school districts make informed decisions to center equity in SEL for all students.**

Who we are

NoVo Foundation works to build a more just and balanced world. NoVo works to advance social and emotional learning, support indigenous communities in North America, and promote local living economies. Across all of its grantmaking, NoVo supports the development of capacities in people—individually and collectively—to help create a world based on mutual respect, collaboration and love.

Education First is a seasoned team of trusted advisors to the leaders responsible for delivering what many Americans want most: public education that effectively prepares all students for success in college, careers and a world of constant change. We devote our energy and expertise to improving opportunities for all children, especially low income students and students of color.

Note: In this deck, we refer to the "SEL field" to indicate the broad collection of individuals and organizations working on issues related to SEL in the U.S. K-12 public education system, which includes research, policy and practice activities at all levels of this system (e.g., classrooms, schools, districts and CMOs, communities)

The global pandemic underscores the importance of SEL and highlights the critical lack of equity in education at large

Need for SEL

Students, parents and K-12 employers reported increased levels of stress during the pandemic

- **39% of students** surveyed in the Spring of 2020 cited feeling **stressed, depressed or anxious** as an obstacle to virtual learning and this percentage rose to **46% in the Fall**[1]

- **41% of K-12 employees** reported that they were working more hours in October 2020 than they were prior to the pandemic and **63% reported feeling stressed** due to the pandemic[2]

- **63% of parents** agree that the pandemic made the 2019-2020 **school year extremely stressful** for them[3]

Need for Equity

The disproportionate experiences of BIPOC and White students during COVID-19 highlight how the pandemic exacerbated pre-existing systemic inequities

- In a survey of more than 20,000 students, Hispanic, Black, Indigenous and multiracial students reported **experiencing a higher average number of obstacles to virtual learning** than Asian or White students[1]

- An analysis of 2020-2021 math and reading Star Assessment data from nearly 3.8 million **students showed differences in growth rate by subgroup** where Black, Hispanic and/or Indigenous students, students with disabilities and English Language Learners were lower than the overall sample[4]

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1. YouthTruth (2021); 2. Liss-Levinson (2021); 3. American Psychological Association (2020); 4. Renaissance Learning (2021)

To address these needs, we researched what it means to advance and center equity in SEL

Research questions

Characteristics
What are the key characteristics of high-quality, equity-centered SEL? What is the rationale behind these characteristics?

What districts can do
What are key actions that districts can take to meet field needs and move towards embedding equity-centered SEL in systems, programs and practices?

Risks, mitigations and questions to consider
What critical factors and questions should districts consider while moving toward equity-centered SEL?

Exemplary practices
What promising work is happening at the intersection of SEL and equity in districts, schools, states and the community?

District CMO | School | State | Ecosystem Community

Note: In this deck, we refer to "system(s)" to indicate school or schools across a district or districts

We found that centering equity in SEL requires intentional shifts to focus on system design and individual student well-being

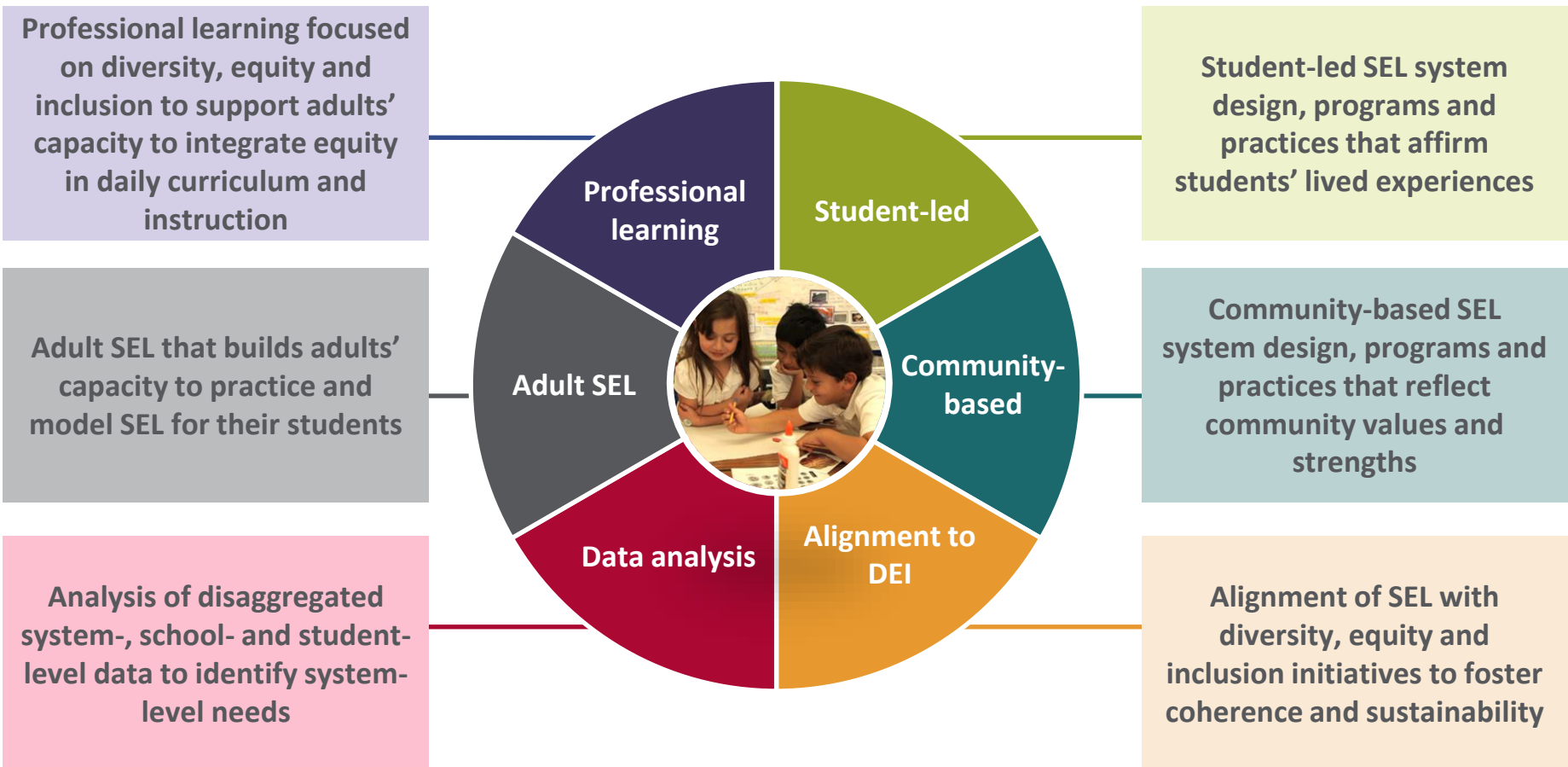| Move from this...	Toward this*
SEL that focuses on the individual student	Examining and changing the system-level conditions in which students are being asked to learn and practice SEL
SEL that focuses on interpersonal relationships	Fostering understanding of root causes of systemic inequities and one's identity, role and agency
SEL implementation that is confined by the boundaries of a standalone program, perceived as a separate initiative or has limited reach	Coherently integrating SEL throughout all aspects of the education system including academics

*See Appendix C for detailed descriptions of each shift
Note: In this deck we refer to "system design" to indicate the broad collection of structural components that influence learning environments, including policies and programming

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Our examination of equity-centered SEL approaches highlighted six key characteristics of high-quality, equity-centered SEL…

Six characteristics of equity-centered SEL

Professional learning focused on diversity, equity and inclusion to support adults' capacity to integrate equity in daily curriculum and instruction

Student-led SEL system design, programs and practices that affirm students' lived experiences

Adult SEL that builds adults' capacity to practice and model SEL for their students

Community-based SEL system design, programs and practices that reflect community values and strengths

Analysis of disaggregated system-, school- and student-level data to identify system-level needs

Alignment of SEL with diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives to foster coherence and sustainability

Professional learning

Student-led

Adult SEL

Community-based

Data analysis

Alignment to DEI

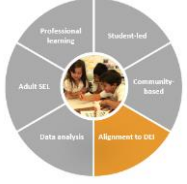# ...And recommendations for districts seeking to center equity in SEL

 Student-led
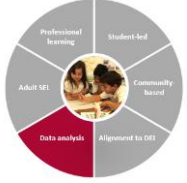- Establish structures for students to **co-design SEL programming**
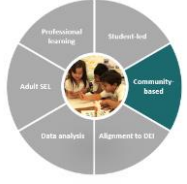
 Community-based
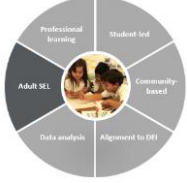- Foster **partnerships** with key organizations in the **community** to bridge in-school and out-of-school SEL

 Alignment to DEI
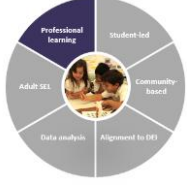- **Align SEL and DEI initiatives** in system design, programs and practices

 Data analysis
- Engage a **diverse group of stakeholders** to analyze and interpret **disaggregated data**

 Adult SEL
- Prioritize professional development centered on **adult SEL** (e.g., opportunities to practice and develop SEL skills with their colleagues)

 Professional Learning
- Engage adults in **professional learning** centered on **diversity, equity and inclusion** (e.g., opportunities to reflect on their own identity, power and privilege)

2 Background & methodology

This research explores how the field has changed since our first landscape scan in 2017, especially how equity practices and policies are emerging in SEL

The 2017 landscape scan...

- Sought to inform efforts in the education sector to spread high-quality, integrated SEL to all schools in the U.S
- Covered five topical areas, including teacher practice focused on SEL, SEL in districts & charter management organizations (CMOs), SEL in federal & state policy, research on SEL and funder investments in SEL

Since that time...

- The reality of the systemic inequities that persist in America, highlighted by the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 and our national reckoning with social justice in 2020, has heightened demand for equity-centered SEL

This updated landscape scan provides...

- Examples and recommendations for implementation of equity-centered SEL strategies and practices in schools and districts

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To inform our findings we conducted desk research and interviewed stakeholders in the SEL field

Discovery (February – March 2021)	**In-depth research (April – May 2021)**	**Final analysis and reporting (June – July 2021)**

Preliminary research

Re-visited **Education First's 2017 SEL landscape scan for NoVo** and identified opportunities to build on earlier research and provide NoVo with new information about the SEL field

Desk research

Reviewed **publicly-available reports, scholarly articles and other materials** to build our knowledge of the SEL field with a particular focus on equity and COVID-19 response

SEL Advisory Group*

Organized periodic meetings with a **group of students and practitioners** to provide input into research findings

Interviews*

Conducted in-depth interviews with **9 leaders in the SEL field**, including state and district leaders and practitioners

Desk research

Continued research to fill gaps in our knowledge

Analysis of findings and strategy implications for NoVo

Elevated **key considerations for NoVo's SEL investment strategy**

Analysis of findings and strategy implications for practitioners

Elevated **key considerations for district leaders and practitioners** in light of the research findings

Dissemination of findings to all involved participants (forthcoming in August)

*See Appendices B and F for list of interviewees and detailed description of the SEL Advisory Group process

We focused our research on what it means to advance and center equity in SEL

Research questions

How can district systems, policies and programming ensure that SEL meets the needs of students who have been historically excluded, such as BIPOC students, English language learners or students with disabilities?

What resources and supports do districts and educators need to center equity in their SEL efforts?

What promising and compelling work is happening at the intersection of SEL and equity, particularly racial equity?

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3   Centering equity in SEL

Over the past several decades, the SEL field has promoted the value of SEL by focusing on student-level and community-level benefits and outcomes

Academics: A meta-analysis of 210 studies of more than 270,000 students showed that students who participated in evidence-based SEL programs had an 11 percentage point gain in academic achievement compared to students who did not participate[1]

Culture and Climate: A meta-analysis of 82 school-based, universal SEL interventions of about 100,000 students showed that students who participated in SEL programming had improved attitudes toward themselves and others as well as fewer disciplinary incidents[2]

Public Health: A 19-year longitudinal study found statistically significant associations between SEL skills in Kindergarten and long-term public health outcomes such as use of public assistance and substance abuse behaviors including binge drinking[3]

Economy: A benefit cost analysis of six social and emotional learning interventions showed that, on average, there is a return of $11 in long-term benefits for every $1 invested[4]

1. Durlak et al. (2011); 2. Taylor et al. (2017); 3. Jones et al. (2015); 4. Belfield et al. (2015)

More recently, we have seen a proliferation of equity-centered SEL approaches emphasizing the evolving need for an integrated, system-level orientation

Practitioners use a variety of terms and approaches to describe equity-centered SEL*

Abolitionist SEL	Anti-racist SEL	Culturally sustaining SEL
Culturally affirming SEL	Trauma informed SEL	Transformative SEL

The recent proliferation of equity-centered SEL approaches is a marked difference from the state of the SEL field in 2017 where a review of 136 SEL frameworks found that fewer than one in five (20%) considered the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse individuals and groups while fewer than one in ten (10%) demonstrated sensitivity to trauma and adversity[1]

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1. Berg et al. (2017)
*See Appendix B for a detailed description of these terms and sources

The global pandemic underscores the importance of SEL as students and adults alike report increased stress, anxiety and depression

*"We really need to focus on SEL because **kids have been completely isolated**, have a **huge amount of social anxiety**."*

–School-based staff

*"There are a lot more kids that are struggling and **needing extra support** [due to the pandemic]."*

–Out-of-school-time Provider

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1. YouthTruth (2021); 2. Liss-Levinson (2021); 3. American Psychological Association (2020)

And the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 highlights the critical lack of equity in education at large

The disproportionate experiences of BIPOC and White students during COVID-19 exacerbated pre-existing systemic inequities

In a survey of more than 20,000 students, Hispanic, Black, Indigenous and multiracial students reported experiencing a higher average number of obstacles to virtual learning than Asian or White students. Obstacles include feeling depressed, stressed or anxious; distractions at home and family responsibilities; students' health or the health of their family members; limited or no internet access; not having an adult to help them with schoolwork[1]

An analysis of 2020-2021 math and reading Star Assessment data from nearly 3.8 million students showed differences in growth rate by subgroup[2]

Fall-to-winter growth rates in the 2020-2021 school year for Black, Hispanic and/or Indigenous students, students with disabilities and English Language Learners were lower than the overall sample

1. YouthTruth (2021); 2. Renaissance Learning (2021)

Given this context, centering equity in SEL requires intentional shifts to focus not only on individual student well-being, but also on systemic conditions shaping the learning environment

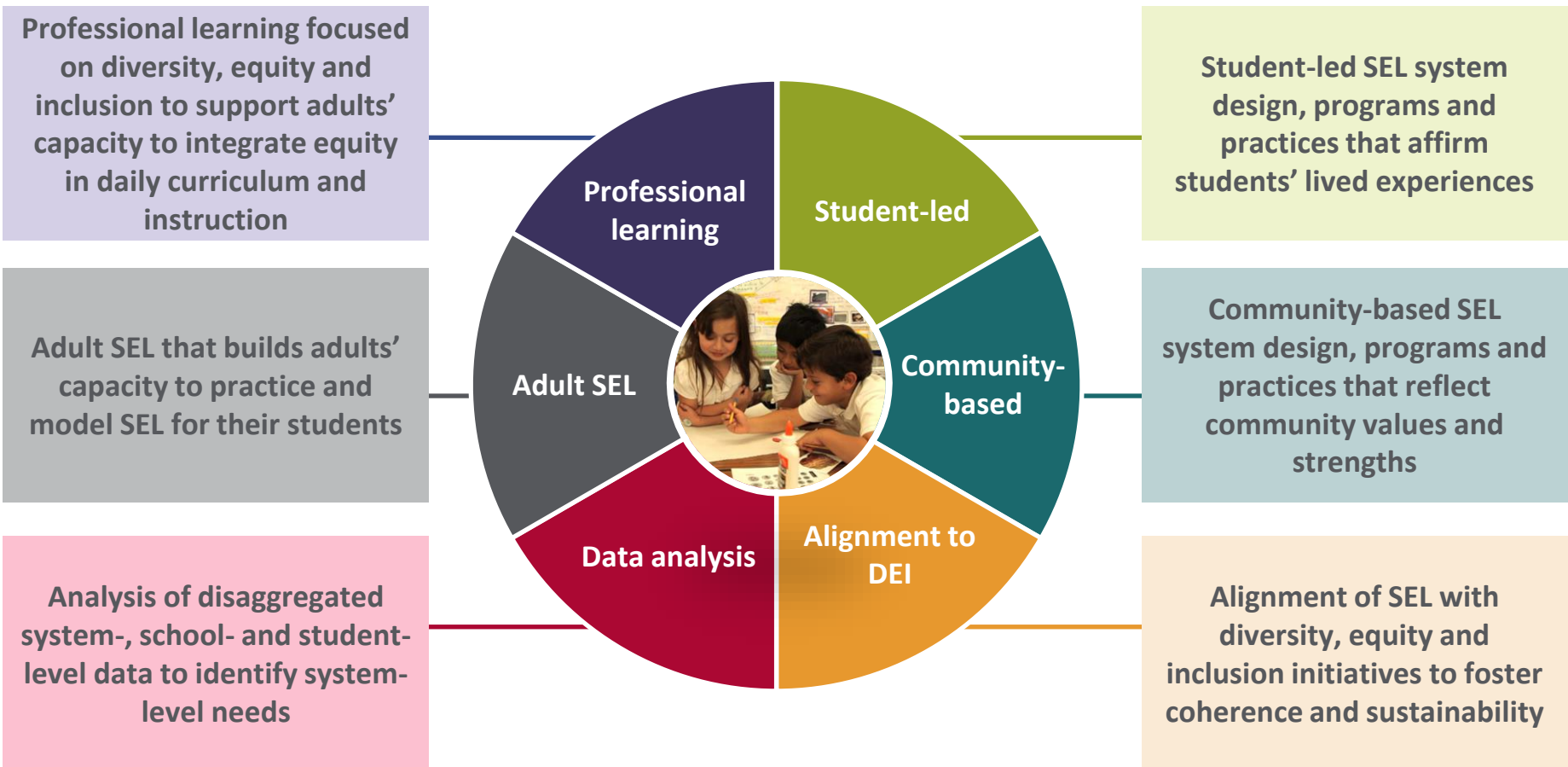| Move from this…	Toward this*
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Six characteristics of equity-centered SEL

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Alignment of SEL with diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives to foster coherence and sustainability

Professional learning

Student-led

Adult SEL

Community-based

Data analysis

Alignment to DEI

We analyzed each of the six key characteristics …

COMPONENTS OF EACH CHARACTERISTIC

Description and rationale
A synthesis of desk research, advisory group input and interviews with state leaders, district leaders, school leaders, educators, out of school staff, funders and students

What districts can do
Key actions districts can take to meet field needs and move towards offering equity-centered SEL

Risks, mitigations and questions to consider
Critical factors and questions for districts to weigh while moving toward equity-centered SEL

Exemplary practices
Examples of practices from districts, schools, states and the community

District CMO   School   State   Ecosystem Community

...And offer a set of related recommendations for districts
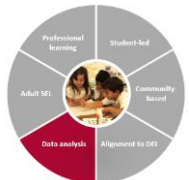
	Student-led	▪ Establish structures for students to **co-design SEL programming**
	Community-based	▪ Foster **partnerships** with key organizations in the **community** to bridge in-school and out-of-school SEL
	Alignment to DEI	▪ **Align SEL and DEI initiatives** in system design, programs and practices
	Data analysis	▪ Engage a **diverse group of stakeholders** to analyze and interpret **disaggregated data**
	Adult SEL	▪ Prioritize professional development centered on **adult SEL** (e.g., opportunities to practice and develop SEL skills with their colleagues)
	Professional learning	▪ Engage adults in **professional learning** centered on **diversity, equity and inclusion** (e.g., opportunities to unpack their own identity, power and privilege)

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Characteristic: Student-led SEL system design, programs and practices affirm students' lived experience

DESCRIPTION

- Centering equity in SEL involves **co-leading and co-designing with young people** as they have deep expertise about their own interests, their peers and their community[1]
- In this approach, **adults provide the necessary structures** and supports while **youth take most or all of the lead** in designing and creating SEL experiences by and for their peers[2]

RATIONALE

- A nationally representative survey of 596 district administrators and staff showed that 58% focus on SEL-specific skills development through standalone curriculum which often **situates adults as the ones providing SEL** to students[3]
- As students reach adolescence, standard SEL curriculum resonates less. Rather, students crave **authentic, respectful relationships** with adults and peers alike[4]
- Youth-adult partnerships that advance student agency and voice **positively affect student SEL** as well as **school climate**[5]

Professional learning · Student-led · Community-based · Alignment to DEI · Data analysis · Adult SEL
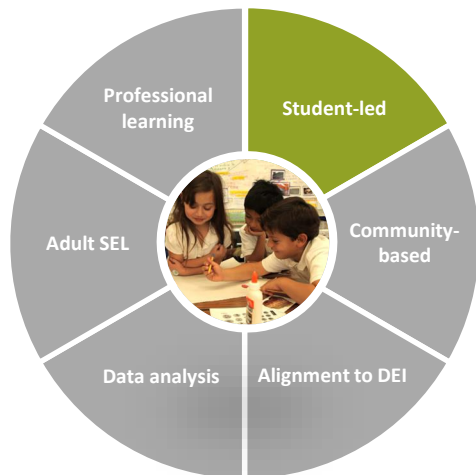
*"Student-led to me means you have adults there for structure or support. Other than that, everything is **run by students**. You can't be student-led if you are telling us what to do all the time. We need to be leading everything, **making the big heavy decisions** and having the final say. We don't need you to look over our shoulder or hold our hand. **We got this**."*[2]

—Student

1. The Reinvention Lab (2020); 2. Education First SEL Advisory Group (2021); 3. Tyton Partners (2020); 4. Yeagers (2017); 5. Shafer (2016)

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Recommendation #1: Establish structures for students to co-design SEL programming

| Move from this...	Toward this
Adults as the sole voice in decision-making	Creating structures for students to reflect on school climate data, design next steps and engage in the decision-making process
Adults engaging a small group of students (e.g., focus groups or interviews) to inform decision-making	Engaging a wide variety of students whose lived experiences reflect the school/district community at large
Adults providing SEL instruction to students	Understanding that students are the experts of their own life experiences and providing them space to design and lead their own SEL programming

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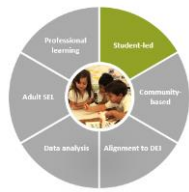
Risks, mitigation strategies and questions to consider:
Districts can explore existing structures and conditions conducive to implementing student-led SEL

POTENTIAL RISKS	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
Creating new structures or initiatives may require significant resources	Identify existing initiatives within the district that lend themselves to student co-design or initiatives
Identifying and engaging a wide variety of students may require organizational change management	Practice culturally responsive outreach by engaging with students in ways that meet their needs (e.g., in their home language, in community spaces)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 **Existing structures**: What systems are already in place within districts to engage students and lift up student voice? How can these be leveraged?

2 **Enabling conditions**: What are the conditions in a district that make co-design possible? What are must-haves, and what are secondary?

3 **Ground support**: What resources and training support do district leaders, school leaders and educators need to realize these shifts?

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District example: Cleveland Metropolitan School District partners with students in SEL data analysis

LEVEL	EXAMPLE
District CMO	In the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, a **group of 10 students per high school** meets with the superintendent quarterly to provide **input on SEL** data collected in the Conditions for Learning Survey. The survey is administered each fall and spring to students, staff and parents[1]

Context: The Cleveland Metropolitan School District developed a student advisory group to garner student input on a multitude of topics, including the Conditions for Learning survey. The survey covers topics like student perception of physical and emotional safety, teacher and adult support, peers' social and problem-solving skills and how much students feel listened to and cared about.

Process: The student advisory group meets quarterly to review topics, make suggestions for improvement and give voice to what is going well. The District CEO helps plan and facilitate the meetings. Students look at the Conditions for Learning survey data and focus on making change within their school. Following each meeting, students meet with administrators at their school site to debrief, apply learnings to their specific school context and address topics written in student-created proposals. The process enables students to see their suggestions impact their school, including enacting dress code policies.

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1. Schlund et al. (2020) and Cleveland School District (2021)

System examples: We see student-led practices within schools, states and communities

LEVEL	EXAMPLE
School	At the Michele Clark Academic Prep Magnet High School in Chicago, IL, students **developed a podcast** for students, family members, teachers, counselors and community members aimed at **providing strategies to manage stress and maintain relationships**[1]
State	Vermont published a set of guidelines for supporting holistic restorative approaches to learning during school closures. The resource prioritizes **student choice, agency, engagement and recommends student-led circles**[2]
Ecosystem Community	Detroit heals Detroit is a nonprofit founded in collaboration with a former high school educator and her students. **BIPOC youth design and lead** curriculum, create programming for **healing circles for their peers** and produce written publications[3]

1. Schlund & Welssberg (2020); 2. Vermont Restorative Approaches Collaborative (n.d.); 3. Detroit Heals Detroit (n.d.)

Characteristic: Community-based SEL system design, programs and practices reflect community values, strengths and context

DESCRIPTION	RATIONALE
▪ Centering equity in SEL involves engaging **families and communities** in "socially dreaming or **collectively imagining** what education, communal well-being, and critical solidarities look like"[1] ▪ Community-based SEL systems, programs and practices include **partnerships between district and out-of-school time intermediaries** and **partnerships between families, schools and out-of-school time providers**[2]	▪ All learning, including SEL, is **culturally based** and sits within local and broader sociopolitical contexts[3] ▪ Because many approaches to SEL are rooted in values of white dominant culture (i.e., the socially constructed notion that "white is right and that there is a right kind of white"), stakeholders may **perpetuate harmful and inequitable ways of thinking and acting**[4] ▪ Partnerships provide safe and stable environments, supportive relationships with a wide range of adults, consistent messages about SEL and **more time to practice SEL**[2]

Professional learning / Student-led / Community-based / Alignment to DEI / Data analysis / Adult SEL
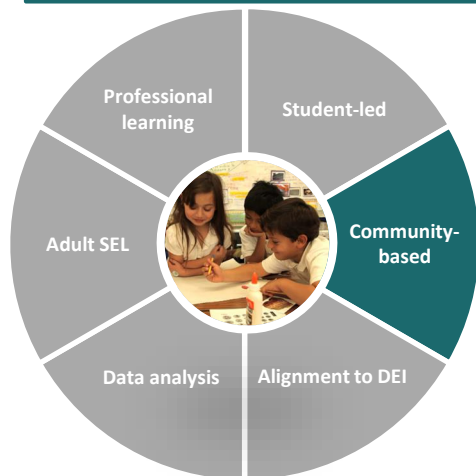
*"[I think it's important to] point school districts to being in intentional relationship with communities and particularly **community organizers** and think about where are the **places and spaces that young people are in when they're not in school** and how to work together with those organizations and really listen to those demands."*

—SEL Expert

1. Rivera (2020); 2. Schwartz et al. (2020); 3. Mahfouz & Anthony-Stevens (2020); 4. Okun (2021)
Education First Interviews (2021)

Recommendation #2: Foster partnerships with key community organizations to bridge in-school and out-of-school SEL

Move from this...	Toward this
SEL programming or policies that are determined primarily by the district	Involving a diverse group of community organizations to help shape SEL programming and policies
Division of responsibility and planning between in-school SEL and out-of-school SEL	Identifying opportunities for collaboration between in-school and out-of-school programming (e.g., out-of-school providers push into schools)
Districts partnering with the same few organizations	Districts partnering with an array of organizations that best serve the needs of the community

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Risks, mitigation strategies and questions to consider:
Districts can foster partnerships through clear MOUs, partnership criteria and targeted outreach

POTENTIAL RISKS	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
Lack of role clarity between districts and partner organizations can lead to overlapping duties or duplication	Be clear about each partner's value-add and exactly what each brings to the table; use memos of understanding (MOUs) to define roles and tasks
Managing collaborative grants may require new processes and structures and it may be difficult to cultivate buy-in	Build the case for collaboration and the value of engaging community in SEL programming using impact data from district partnerships

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 **Partnership criteria**: What criteria should districts use to identify partner organizations? How do districts communicate criteria in a transparent way? How do they avoid bias in the selection process?

2 **Intersection with equity**: How do districts choose partnerships or engagements that represent the lived experiences of community members? How do districts select partnerships beyond those they typically encounter? How do districts identify organizations well-situated to advance district and community priorities?

3 **Services:** What services can districts provide that add value to or complement these partnerships? What capacity should districts build to provide the services in a high-quality way?

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District example: The Phillips Indian Educators attendance workgroup serves Native students through multiple community-based partnerships

LEVEL	EXAMPLE
District CMO	In Minneapolis Public Schools, **the Phillips Indian Educators (PIE) attendance workgroup**, composed of staff from Minneapolis Public Schools and the Indian Education Department, the Division of Indian Work, Little Earth of United Tribes, Migizi Communications, Hennepin County Libraries and Hennepin County meet **weekly throughout the school year** to discuss ways to promote attendance through **positive reinforcement and community outreach**[1]

Context: The Phillips Indian Educators attendance workgroup has strived to engage with every K-12 Native student in the district to directly address systemic inequities which led to historically low attendance rates for Native students in Minneapolis. Students are required to attend school until they are 18 years old and families face civil charges in truancy courts for too many absences. Native communities often view this approach as punitive and cite it as a source of mistrust in the Minneapolis government systems.

Process: The attendance workgroup's early years were supported by grants, but community resources and contributions now fund the self-sustaining initiative. The group follows these values in conducting their work:
- Community support: Communal meals to encourage students to engage in their education; raffles to reward ongoing attendance; parent training and stipend for volunteering in schools
- Direct outreach: Connect with families and students to understand the barriers to consistent attendance
- Education: Provide training to district staff about the history of truancy and family separation within Native communities
- Celebrations: Host an annual attendance celebration

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System examples: We see community-based practices within schools, states and communities

LEVEL	EXAMPLE
School	Design Tech High School in San Francisco, CA **partners with organizations in the community** to offer optional <u>daily wellness activities</u> for students. Students, faculty and community partners alike design the activities, which include transcendental meditation, mindful reset, yoga stretch break, artificial intelligence, café club, CrossFit, Game + Animation, and calligraphy[1]
State	The New Mexico Public Education Department used **CARES funding to award SEL microgrants to over 80 schools**. In so doing, they supported communities in giving voice to their own SEL needs and vision[2]
Ecosystem Community	Communities participating in the Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative (PSELI) — like Tacoma, Washington — increased opportunities for social and emotional learning, improved adult practices, learning environments, and instruction; and **developed stronger partnerships between the school districts and out-of-school-time (OST) providers.** The model assumes strong collaboration between districts and OST providers[3]

# **Characteristic:** Aligning SEL with diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives fosters coherence and sustainability

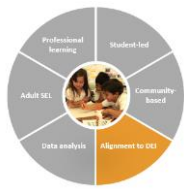| DESCRIPTION	RATIONALE
▪ SEL that centers equity is interconnected to **broader system initiatives** focused on anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) ▪ Equity-centered SEL explicitly engages with students about topics of **identity, power and privilege**[1]	▪ SEL and equity efforts that are "led by different departments or individuals in district offices, [contribute] to, for example, lack of communication, **miscommunication, and/or a sense of competing priorities**"[2] ▪ **SEL divorced from anti-racism and DEI perpetuates systemic inequities** by pushing the false narrative that students and adults must be resilient in the face of racism and learn to maintain social and emotional well-being at the expense of the pursuit of justice or structural change[3]
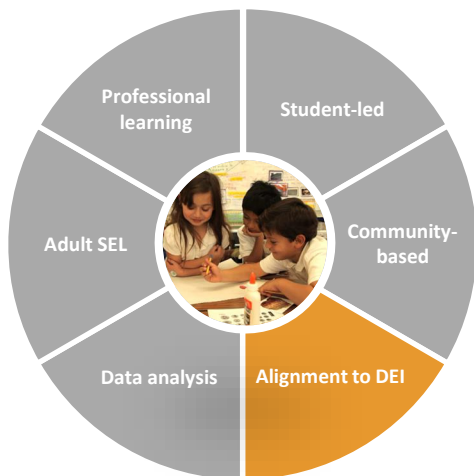
*"I engage with a lot of school districts who want a plug-and-play curriculum for culturally affirming SEL. My first questions in response are always do you have police in schools? What are the supports for your educators in your school building? Do you engage in restorative and transformative practices? What do your dress code policies look like? Are they racist and sexist? Let's get to **the root of the problems**."*

—SEL Expert

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1. Simmons (2019a); 2. Schlund et al. (2020); 3. Simmons (2021) and Weaver (2020); Education First Interviews (2021)

Recommendation #3: Align SEL and DEI initiatives in system design, programs and practices

Move from this…	Toward this
SEL and DEI departments that manage their own initiatives and programs	SEL and DEI departments that collaborate regularly and co-create programming
SEL and academic programming that focuses solely on student-level social and emotional skills development	SEL and academic programming that considers the historical and sociopolitical context* of power and privilege
Stand-alone goals to integrate SEL and equity	Structures, frameworks and processes that enable clear actions aligned to goals (e.g., framework that explains what it means to center equity in SEL)

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Risks, mitigation strategies and questions to consider:
Districts can align SEL and DEI programs by identifying structures for collaboration and coherence

POTENTIAL RISKS	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
Educators or school and district leaders may not have a clear sense of how to implement culturally affirming curriculum or SEL	Consider working with a locally-based facilitator who can help staff grow their knowledge of culturally affirming curriculum and how it intersects with SEL
Cross department collaboration may require new structures	Build structures that foster collaboration within departments (e.g., standing meetings, staff that are .5 FTE in each department, adjacent offices)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 **Curriculum criteria**: What criteria and/or processes should districts use to identify culturally affirming curriculum and/or SEL approaches that take into account historical and sociopolitical context of power and privilege?

2 **Fostering collaboration**: What structures exist within departments to foster collaboration? How can districts leverage these to bolster collaboration between the SEL and DEI departments?

3 **Building coherence:** How will districts develop tools, frameworks and structures that explicitly enable them to center equity and SEL? Are there locally-based partners or external parties who can aid in the process?

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District example: In Oakland Unified School District, system design, programs and practices advance an integrated approach to SEL and equity

LEVEL	EXAMPLE
District CMO	**The Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)** merges SEL and equity in various ways through departmental collaborations between the SEL, equity and academics departments, a commitment to restorative justice and equity-focused adult SEL standards[1]

Context: OUSD has a longstanding SEL program with a focus on equity. This is evident across many aspects of their system including "the district's strategic plan, SEL Department, SEL board policy, SEL standards, classroom curricula, restorative justice, professional learning, and performance frameworks for adults, students, and schools."[2]

Process: OUSD advances an integrated approach to SEL and equity by:
- Creating multiple avenues for students and adults to center equity in SEL practices, including "expanding restorative justice approach to discipline, implementing the African American Male Achievement Program in both elementary and secondary schools, and trauma-informed practices throughout the system"[2]
- After nearly a decade of advocacy by the Black Organizing Project, OUSD passed the George Floyd Resolution on June 24, 2021 which eliminated the Oakland School Police Department and reinvested its "$6 million budget into a new safety plan focused on supporting students and fighting the school-to-prison pipeline." As part of the new plan, school security officers who are not sworn police officers will be retrained on restorative justice practices and ways to build positive relationships with students[3]

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1. Schlund et al. (2020); 2. CASEL (2021); 3. Getachew (2021)

System examples: We see evidence of SEL practices that are aligned to diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives within schools, states and communities

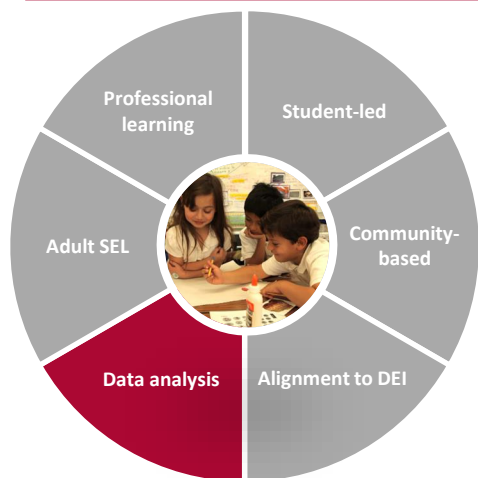| LEVEL	EXAMPLE
School	The Native American Community Academy in Albuquerque, NM is centered on culturally sustaining principles for Native students by **deeply integrating personal wellness, cultural identity and academic success.**[1] Students regularly use a <u>wellness wheel</u> as a tool to identify and articulate their wellbeing
State	Wisconsin's State Superintendent's Equity Stakeholder Council, comprised of education and community leaders, reviewed and proposed **strategies for districts and schools to implement SEL with a focus on equity.** The Council recommends that districts and schools "identify, acknowledge, assess, and address the institutional barriers that may unintentionally impede students' success"[2]
Ecosystem Community	The Racial Reconciliation and Healing Project in Boston, MA provides programming to high school youth centered on **understanding intersectionality** (i.e., "a lens for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other"[3]) **and the history of racism, regulating their emotions and managing their stress level**[4]

1. Native American Community Academy (2020); 2. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2020);
3. Steinmetz (2020); 4. Racial Reconciliation & Healing Project (2021)

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Characteristic: Analyzing disaggregated system- and student-level data enables districts to identify system-level needs

DESCRIPTION	RATIONALE
- SEL that centers equity relies on thoughtfully collecting and analyzing data **disaggregated by student subgroup** - When captured and explored **with nuanced context and with varied stakeholders**, data can provide an "opportunity to share power, deepen relationships, continuously improve support for students, families and staff" and discern solutions which appropriately address root causes[1]	- Analyzing disaggregated data can bring to light **how different subgroups of students experience and perceive their school**[2] - System-level data can be useful in **analyzing the environment** in which students develop SEL competencies, such as an examination of exclusionary discipline practices or inequities in resource allocation or school climate data[3]

Professional learning · Student-led · Community-based · Alignment to DEI · Data analysis · Adult SEL

"*We identified in one data report that our African American students were disproportionately suspended in comparison to our students of other races. This data informed us about what needs to change. How can we ensure **equitable practices** are being put in place so our students have access to the same rigorous instruction as all students?*"

—School-based staff

1. CASEL (2020); 2. Keels (2020); 3. Gregory & Fergus (2017); Education First Interviews (2021)

Recommendation #4: Engage a diverse group of stakeholders to analyze and interpret disaggregated data
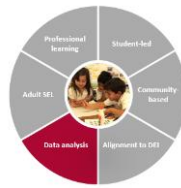
| Move from this...	Toward this
Analyzing data that is disaggregated by large subgroups (e.g., students who identify as BIPOC)	Analyzing data that is disaggregated by multiple specific populations (e.g., Indigenous boys with IEPs) to identify nuanced trends
Administrators analyzing, interpreting drawing conclusions from the data and making action plans to address it	A diverse group of stakeholders (e.g., students, community members, teachers, administrators) analyzing the data and co-creating action plans
Using one type of data (e.g., school climate data) to inform decisions	Using multiple types of data (e.g., school climate data, student discipline data, student advisory groups) to inform decisions

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Risks, mitigation strategies and questions to consider:
Districts can analyze disaggregated data by engaging data analysts and comprehensive data protocols
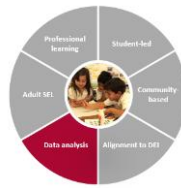
| POTENTIAL RISKS	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
Staff and stakeholders may need additional supports or context building in order to engage in data driven conversations	Consider employing a data analyst to explain the data and address any questions that surface for staff or stakeholders as they interpret the data
Data collection and analysis can be biased which may reinforce biased narratives	Establish a clear set of criteria to collect key data (e.g., data aligned to priorities), utilize criteria to analyze the data and use protocols (e.g., the 5 whys, fishbone) to identify trends, and ask for feedback on insights

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 **Data collection**: What information is the district collecting from schools? In what ways is student voice and/or community voice present within the data? Are there barriers that prevent schools from sharing data? If yes, what can the district do to mitigate them?

2 **Data analysis**: What are the right data to examine and in what ways? What data does the district have to understand the historical context, current context and changes over time?

3 **Stakeholder engagement:** Which stakeholders can districts engage in the data process from design to analysis and application? What trainings or supports might those stakeholders need? How are districts holding themselves accountable for being responsive to stakeholder input?

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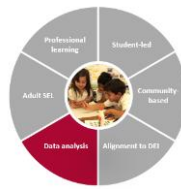
District example: The Boston Charter Research Collaborative employs protocols that enable thorough data analysis and interpretation
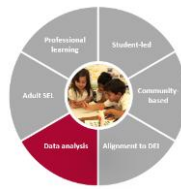
LEVEL	EXAMPLE
District CMO	The CMOs in the Boston Charter Research Collaborative collect, analyze and discuss data on an ongoing basis to **identify gaps and bright spots, surface questions about the efficacy of their SEL programming and course correct their programming**[1]

Context: The Boston Charter Research Collaborative is a research practice partnership that consists of six CMOs (24 schools), researchers at the Center for Education Policy Research at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Transforming Education. The collaborative focuses on measuring students' social and emotional learning, including data deep dive meetings that enable analysis of SEL data.

Process: Each school engages in regular data deep dive meetings that include practitioners and researchers. Each data meeting utilizes the following meeting agenda:
- Invite key team members to the meeting, including administrators, instructional staff and data analysts
- Ground in the goals of the review and establish norms
- Present collaborative-wide trends and school specific data by subgroup (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender), using standardized scores across the collaborative as a comparison
- Focus on the "so-what" of the data and keep the discussion jargon-free
- Discuss reactions to the data and brainstorm possible root causes of outliers or trends; some discussions may use root cause analysis protocols like the five whys [2] or fishbone [3]

System examples: We see equity-focused SEL data collection and analysis practices within schools, states and communities

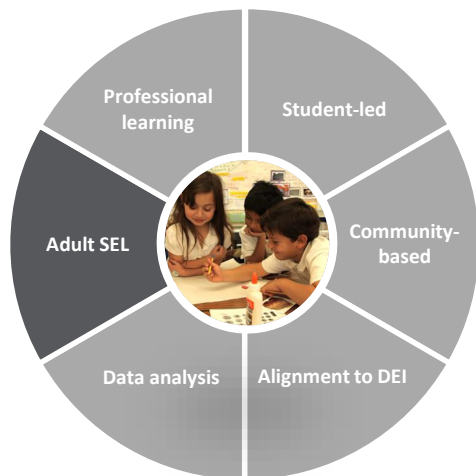| LEVEL	EXAMPLE
School	At the Inspired Teaching Demonstration School in Washington, D.C., educators use an **SEL pre-referral checklist** that encourages them to reframe how they think about students' behaviors, **flags concerns at early stages**, and facilitates the use of interventions in the classroom prior to escalation. The school also organizes **focus groups with parents and students** to analyze student well-being survey data and collectively brainstorm and co-create possible next steps in response to trends in the data[1]
State	Washington's Education Research and Data Center gathers longitudinal student data, **disaggregates it for dual language learners, special education, and race/ethnicity** and analyzes students' social and emotional learning[2]
Ecosystem Community	The **Core Districts** in CA measure SEL outcomes through an innovative accountability system. They compiled a **series of surveys for students, parents and staff** to measure personal well-being, interpersonal well-being and learning environment[3]

1. Education First Interviews (2021); 2. America's Promise Alliance, The Aspen Institute & CCSSO (2018); 3. Marsh et al. (2018) and CORE Districts (n.d.)

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Characteristic: Focusing on SEL for adults builds their capacity to practice and model SEL for their students

DESCRIPTION	RATIONALE
▪ Adult SEL **applies to all adults that students interact** with at school including bus drivers, cafeteria workers, office administers, custodians, counselors, teachers, principals and more ▪ Adults need **space, time and supports** to consistently practice and develop their own SEL skills in a psychologically safe environment both alone and **with peers**[1]	▪ Educators with a strong SEL practice report **less stress and burnout**[2], lower occupational anxiety and depression, and greater engagement[3] ▪ There is a **strong link** between **educator SEL and student SEL**; students can benefit when adults receive support for their own SEL[4] ▪ Additionally, educators trained in SEL have better interactions with their students[3], can **model SEL more effectively**[4] and have more capacity to support students who are experiencing trauma

Professional learning

Student-led

Adult SEL

Community-based

Data analysis

Alignment to DEI

*"**Adults need their own space and time to process**…[It's important to] provide space for processing what they're going through like the stressful events of remote teaching or the pandemic and all the loss"*

—SEL Expert

1. Woolf (n.d.); 2. The Aspen Institute (2018); 3. Simmons et al. (2018); 4. Petrokubi et al. (2019); Education First Interviews (2021)

Recommendation #5: Prioritize professional development that focuses intentionally on adult SEL

Move from this…	**Toward this**
Professional development that focuses primarily on implementing SEL practices for students	Professional development that focuses on SEL practices for adults before or in addition to exploring student-level practices
Providing professional development solely directed at educators	Providing professional development to educators, administrators, school staff and related personnel
Opt-in opportunities for educators to connect with one another about their experiences	Time within the schedule dedicated to adult connection and discussion

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Risks, mitigation strategies and questions to consider:
Districts can implement adult SEL by right-sizing programming and identifying funding and resources

POTENTIAL RISKS	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
Since professional development time is limited, prioritizing adult SEL can limit the time districts can spend on other professional development	Consider a short, professional development sequence that focuses on adult SEL, then incorporate adult SEL into onboarding for new staff
Providing training to all school-affiliated staff can incur significant cost	Identify grant opportunities that provide funding to integrate adult SEL into professional development for all staff
Scaffolding additional mental health supports for staff requires resources	Examine the resources present within the district or surrounding community to develop partnerships or collaborations

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 **Adult SEL integration**: How can districts incorporate adult SEL throughout professional development? Are there pre-existing curriculums or trainings that districts can use or customize? Are there locally-based technical assistance providers who are best situated to deliver adult SEL professional development?

2 **Mental health supports**: What mental health resources exist within the district or surrounding community? What supports (e.g., provide a list of resources, offer access to mental health professionals) can districts provide to staff?

3 **Cost-benefit:** What efforts to implement adult SEL professional development will be most cost-effective and provide staff with the greatest learning?

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District example: Palm Beach County prioritizes adult SEL as an integral component of SEL implementation

LEVEL	EXAMPLE
District CMO	The School District of Palm Beach County prioritizes adult SEL by providing staff with training in partnership with a local out-of-school time provider, Prime Time Palm Beach County, which focuses on adult skills and practices including **developing connections with colleagues**[1]

Context: The School District of Palm Beach County's adult SEL professional development is made possible by the Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative (PSELI), funded by the Wallace Foundation. Over the course of the six-year initiative, participating communities increased opportunities for social and emotional learning, improved adult practices, learning environments, and instruction; and developed stronger partnerships between the school districts and out-of-school-time providers.

Process: The School District of Palm Beach County offered sequenced professional development, including monthly site visits from coaches with additional support as needed:
- Year 1: Define, explain and introduce SEL
- Year 2: Use SEL lessons, build adults' SEL skills and integrate SEL and academics. This included the "Bringing Yourself to Work" training, which centers on relationships, self-awareness and group interactions for adults.
- Year 3: SEL coach conduct site visits

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1. Schwartz et al. (2020)

System examples: We see adult SEL practices within schools, states and communities

| LEVEL	EXAMPLE
School	The New Heights Charter School in Los Angeles, CA **provides SEL to educators** by building an inclusive environment for educators and students alike, increasing understanding of secondary trauma and supporting teachers in developing a self-care plan[1]
State	The Wisconsin State Education agency includes **adult social and emotional competencies** within their SEL competencies and offers an online coaching toolkit on how coaches can support adult SEL[2]
Ecosystem Community	The Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child is a **university-district partnership that is focused on developing teachers' social, emotional and cultural competencies** by nesting competencies within the curriculum and providing professional development to those who work with teacher candidates and teacher candidates directly[3]

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Characteristic: Professional learning around diversity, equity and inclusion builds adults' capacity to integrate equity in daily curriculum and instruction

DESCRIPTION	RATIONALE
High-quality professional learning focused on diversity, equity and inclusion: + Equips adults to **reflect** on their own identity, power and privilege[1] + Teaches adults about the **history and excellence of historically excluded communities** often not taught in schools[1] + Builds adults' capacity to **identify and change** policies and structures that uphold racism and marginalizes groups with diminished privilege[1] + Builds adults' capacity to **design or adapt** curricular materials to center equity	• An educator's **personal competencies and beliefs** inform their capacity to model and cultivate SEL that centers equity for students[2] • An educator's implicit bias may engender disproportionately low expectations for historically excluded students. However, with high-quality professional learning, educators can **grow their capacity** to provide SEL that centers equity[3]

Professional learning · Student-led · Community-based · Alignment to DEI · Data analysis · Adult SEL
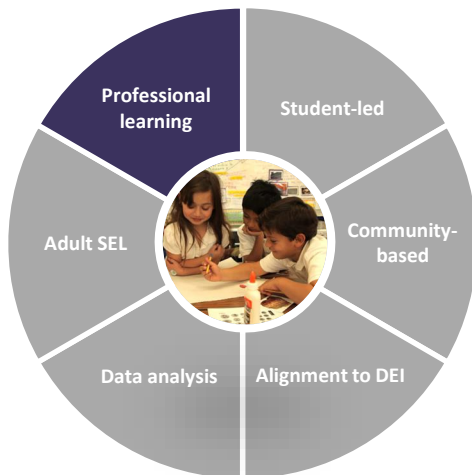
*"A lot of our PD is focused on SEL through a **racial justice lens**…We actively talk about what's in the news. We talk about how do we become actively anti-racist? We talk about the problem of anti-blackness. All of this is part of our PD."*

—School-based staff

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1. Simmons (2019b) and National Equity Project (n.d.); 2. Jagers et al. (2019), Kaler-Jones (2020) and Mahfouz & Anthony-Stevens (2020); 3. Simmons (2021); Education First Interviews (2021)

Recommendation #6: Engage adults in professional learning centered on diversity, equity and inclusion

Move from this…	**Toward this**
Professional learning that does not focus on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) or only does so at a theoretical level	Professional learning that focuses on DEI enables adults to reflect on power and privilege, and how those influence teaching practices (e.g., resource selection, curriculum delivery and interactions with students)
Professional learning that is facilitated solely by outside experts	Professional learning that is facilitated by outside experts and/or knowledgeable individuals within the community who are familiar with the community context
Professional learning that uses a deficit lens and posits that only historically excluded students need SEL[1]	Professional learning that recognizes the advanced SEL skills of many students of color and posits SEL as learning for *all* students[1]

1. National Equity Project (n.d.) and Education Trust (2020)

Risks, mitigation strategies and questions to consider:
Districts can offer differentiated professional learning experiences to support educators' readiness to learn

POTENTIAL RISKS	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
State-wide or local political context (e.g., legislation that bans critical race theory) may deprioritize trainings that explicitly focus on race and anti-racism	Develop a proposition statement about the value of the trainings and how they enable and align to district priorities
There will be a wide spectrum of personal, adult readiness to learn about diversity, equity and inclusion	Consider scaffolded training options to provide differentiated support to educators based on their readiness and prior experiences

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 **DEI integration**: How can districts incorporate DEI throughout professional learning? Are there pre-existing curriculums or trainings that districts want to use or develop? How can districts draw from existing internal capacity, expertise within the community or key external partners?

2 **Scaffolding**: What avenues exist to assess adult readiness to engage in the professional learning? What capacity exists to provide differentiated supports?

3 **Enabling conditions**: What are the conditions in a district that make this professional learning possible? What are must-haves and what are secondary? How will districts navigate the political landscape?

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District example: The Anchorage School District integrated Alaska Native cultural heritage and SEL through professional learning

LEVEL	EXAMPLE
District CMO	Anchorage School District in Alaska hired **experts in Native culture and language to design professional learning for educators**. The learning centered around affirming the needs of native students, cultivating SEL and strengthening academics[1]

Context: Anchorage School District has a longstanding SEL program. In attempt to address an opportunity gap between Alaska Native boys and their peers, the district launched Project Ki'L in Girdwood, Alaska.

Process: Project Ki'L provided students with a year-long experience focused on integrating Alaska Native cultural heritage and SEL. The program provided supports to students, educators and the community at large. It consisted of the following:
- Students participated in weekly after-school activities, field trips and a three-week summer camp
- Families and community engaged in a process of developing relationships and exploring actions to student success (DREAMS)
- Community members engaged in a dialogue with each other and trained facilitators focused on cultural assets and practicing SEL in a cultural context

1. Education First (2017)

System examples: We see equity-aligned professional learning practices within schools, states and communities

LEVEL	EXAMPLE
School	A middle school in Oakland Unified School District in California uses their professional learning time to allow **teachers to reflect on current events with one another and/or to learn specific skills such as "calling-in"** your colleagues when you see a harmful practice[1]
State	Tennessee's Leaders for Equity Playbook provides an action plan framework, an equity shifts continuum, key actions and resources to school and district leaders focused on topics like **decreasing chronic absenteeism** and **reducing disproportionate out of school suspensions and expulsion rates**[2]
Ecosystem Community	The Institute for Anti-Racist Education provides **diversity, equity and inclusion trainings to educators**, including topics such as **disrupting the single story, trauma 101, shifting from a deficit lens to a healing lens** and how to guide students through a restorative writing process[3]

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Truly centering equity in SEL requires systemic and coherent policies and practices applied at every level of the education system and engaging local communities, funders, leaders and policy makers.

We hope you will use this resource to help center equity in SEL for all students.

"I really appreciated [the push to explicitly focus on equity through reimagining the purpose of SEL and examining system-level policies across the entire educational ecosystem]. I think oftentimes SEL is used as a tool for behavior management versus seeing it as something foundational that will help us build shared language, practices and community."

—SEL advisory group member

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