Align Resources for SEL

Dedicated, long-term funding and staff are key for sustaining SEL implementation and send a strong message that SEL is a priority.

Below you’ll find an overview of: WHAT high-quality implementation looks like, WHY it’s important, WHEN to engage in this key activity, and WHO to involve. Also see the PROCESS page for step-by-step guidance on how to engage in the work, and the RESOURCES page for additional tools to support your efforts.

What are aligned resources to support SEL?

To ensure the effective roll-out, implementation, and sustainability of SEL, districts need to align both financial and human resources.

- **Financial resources** refer to funding, both internal and external, that your district allocates to support SEL leadership, professional development, curriculum/programs, and other aspects of SEL implementation. By committing funding, your district signals its recognition of the benefits of SEL for students. A robust funding strategy also ensures that SEL efforts can survive changes in leadership, politics, and the economy.

- **Human resources** are dedicated, skilled, and knowledgeable staff who represent the diversity in your district and drive SEL implementation. This includes a highly-skilled district lead for SEL, as well as SEL team members and coaches who provide expert guidance and professional learning to schools. In addition to a central office team, SEL implementation will rely on school leaders and teachers who are proficient in SEL. Leaders and coaches in other areas in the district, such as instructional coaches, are also key to implementing high-quality SEL. Finally, part of aligning human resources to support SEL is creating policies and procedures that support finding and recruiting staff and teachers who will support your mission of implementing SEL.

These two types of resources are intertwined: Your funding ensures your district’s capacity to staff for SEL, and your plans regarding staffing and training inform your operational budget.

When resources for SEL are well-aligned:

- A strong long-term budget and plan for equitable SEL funding meet the needs of all schools.
- Funding comes from diversified sources as part of a budget to roll out, adequately staff, support, and sustain ongoing SEL implementation for all students.
- District human resources practices embed SEL considerations into candidate screening, hiring, evaluation, and employment policies at the district and school levels.
- District and school job descriptions highlight the importance of modeling SEL competencies and include SEL as an expected competency for job candidates, and attention is paid to the diversity of background in candidates and hires.

Use the Rubric to assess how well your district has aligned financial and human resources for SEL.

Why is it necessary to align resources to support SEL?

Dedicated, long-term funding is critical to the success of SEL in your district. Even a small-scale launch will fail without dedicated financial resources. And once the initiative is launched, your district will need to continue to apply supports at
the school, classroom, and community levels to ensure long-term, systemic implementation of SEL.

A key component of your SEL budget will be to fund the staff needed for high-quality implementation. This includes a leader who will plan and advocate for SEL. This SEL lead, along with a support team, ensures that SEL retains its place in the district’s strategic plan and budget. This district-level SEL team works with district and community leaders, professional developers, coaches, curriculum and instructional leaders, and other stakeholders to communicate and educate others about SEL and to collaborate on integrating SEL into their practice, professional development, etc.

In addition to its district-level work, the SEL team is crucial to the implementation of SEL in the school and classroom. SEL coaches and specialists provide leadership teams and teachers with the training and resources they need to incorporate SEL into instruction, policies, and practices. For an example of how one district clarified how SEL staff support the district’s goals and strategic plan, see Austin Independent School District’s SEL Department and Specialist Logic Model.

There’s another important reason to align your resources for SEL: By dedicating necessary financial and human resources to SEL, your district sends a strong message to teachers, parents, district and community leaders, and other stakeholders that SEL is a priority that is here to stay.

**When should my district align and develop resources to support SEL?**

Your district may want to align and develop resources:

- After gaining support for SEL among district leaders. Once you’ve outlined a district plan for SEL, you’re ready to begin assessing and aligning your roll-out and implementation plan with your financial and human resources.

- Before committing to a large-scale implementation or launching a major fundraising campaign. Recognize that it takes time to increase the expertise of newly hired staff and that they may need weeks or months of training and professional learning to completely fulfill the roles in their job descriptions. This is particularly the case if these staff are new roles to the district, so you’ll want to ensure you’ve planned enough time to hire and onboard these staff to support implementation efforts.

- Before seeking major grants and external partners. While grants and external partners may factor into your budget and staffing, it’s important to develop an initial plan that demonstrates aligned resources. With a financial and staffing strategy in hand, you’ll be able to communicate more effectively to external funders how you intend to use their support to achieve SEL outcomes and that you’re committed to matching their support with both staffing and internal financial resources.

**Who needs to be involved?**

To align financial and human resources to support SEL, you need to develop a full grasp of the programming, professional learning, and costs needed to support implementation, as well as any potential new funding sources for SEL.

Here are some of the people you’ll likely need to involve:

- SEL leads and teams
- Superintendent
- Chief financial officer
- Chief human resources officer
- Chief academic officer and/or curriculum and instruction leads
- Professional development leadership
- District fund development staff
- Representative principals and principal supervisors (to get an understanding of site needs and costs)