Develop and Strengthen Family and Community Partnerships

SEL is reinforced and sustained when districts, families, and community partners align and work together.

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 family and community partnerships that support SEL?

Family and community partnerships consist of far more than public relations or sharing articles about practices to try at home. A genuine district-family partnership prioritizes a two-way flow of information and perspectives and engages parents and caregivers to guide a district’s decision-making and drive sustainability of SEL. A strong district-family partnership leverages families’ expertise and diversity to ensure that SEL is taught in culturally relevant ways that celebrate the assets, identity, and diversity students bring to school, making SEL more impactful and lasting.

Districts develop strong family partnerships when they:

- Prioritize positive staff-family relationships and develop strategies for two-way communication with families at the district and school levels.
- Offer meaningful opportunities for families to participate and collaborate in SEL activities, so that families understand, experience, inform, and support the SEL development of students in partnership with school and district staff.
- Gather input from families about their preferences and needs to inform family partnership strategies.
- Regularly collect feedback about families’ experiences and changing needs, and use these data to improve family partnership strategies.

Use the Rubric to assess your approach to developing family partnerships.

Community partnerships for SEL leverage relationships with external organizations or groups that have the potential to reinforce social and emotional skill development, whether the setting is during the school day, before or after school, inside the school, or out in the community. For some community partners, social and emotional learning may be a primary part of their mission, while for others it may be a fortunate byproduct. Either way, districts can provide guidelines, training, and technical support to ensure that schools and their partners recognize common goals, adopt aligned frameworks and language for SEL, and calibrate on adult behaviors that appropriately model and reinforce SEL for students.

Districts develop strong community partnerships when they work with partners to:

- Intentionally align the language and practices they use to describe and promote SEL.
- Ensure that SEL is a priority during the school day and during out-of-school time.
- Ensure that students and families have access to a broad range of SEL-related community services.
Use the Rubric to assess your approach to developing SEL-related community partnerships.

Why does my district need family and community partnerships?

Social and emotional learning doesn't stop when students leave the classroom. All social interactions are learning experiences, and many of a young person's formative experiences will take place in informal learning environments at home and other social spaces. Family and community partnerships build bridges between a school and the world students experience outside of its walls.

These partners provide key insight about their children, their community, and their values. They are also perfectly situated to reinforce and sustain social and emotional learning. When young people see peers and adults outside of the school placing value on and modeling the same social and emotional skills they are learning about and practicing in the classroom, these skills become more than the answer to a teacher's question—they become the way we think and interact in the world.

A sense of school connectedness is stronger when students feel that they, their family, their culture, and the people and contexts with which they feel most at home are respected and included in their schools. District and school staff also benefit from family and community partnerships as they learn about the experiences, perspectives, values, and assets of the communities they serve, and they are better at reaching and supporting students because of these partnerships.

When should my district develop family and community partnerships?

Districts should involve family and community members as partners on the front end, as they set a vision and make important decisions about how SEL will be rolled out, what curricula and SEL strengthening practices will be promoted, or what SEL or school climate guidelines or standards will become policy. This will pay dividends down the road in the implementation phase—a plan that has community support and has been shaped to the unique culture and characteristics of the community will have greater school and staff member buy-in and will be more likely to be sustained over time and have the desired impact with students.

During implementation, districts also should play a role in facilitating school-based processes to strengthen family and community partnerships. Districts should set a clear vision for school-level partnerships, provide resources so that schools can meet expectations, and create a structure to provide technical assistance and accountability.

Who needs to be involved?

When cultivating partnerships with families, a district should take care to engage parents and caregivers that represent a diverse range of family structures, backgrounds, and circumstances. In any district, there are strong parent advocates who readily volunteer for a leadership role or are quick to voice their point of view or suggestions for improvement.

It is essential to include parents and caregivers beyond the most outspoken advocates, and in particular those who may feel left out of traditional school district engagements due to language, immigration status, education level, experience of racism, or other factors. This requires district staff to do outreach in culturally responsive ways and focus on creating contexts where all families receive information in a way that they understand, and feel welcome and encouraged to participate in processes that impact their children's learning. Likewise, when setting guidelines for school-level partnerships, districts should prioritize equitable family representation and non-traditional parent leadership.

When connecting with community partners, districts should reach out to organizations that provide direct support for a significant percentage of students and have potential to incorporate social and emotional skill building into their program or support model. This might include:

- OST providers
- Recess support
- Summer programs
• Academic enrichment or arts programs
• Tutoring or mentorship services
• Parks department, athletic leagues, YMCA
• Organizations that employ many high school-aged youth
• Social service organizations
• Counseling, social skill-building, or mental health services
• Restorative justice organizations
• Churches
• Shelters
• Organizations that host students for service projects
• Juvenile justice
Resources

Below, you’ll find resources to help develop and strengthen family and community partnerships.

Find ready-to-use tools

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<th>TITLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEL 3 Signature Practices introductory video – Out of School Time version</strong></td>
<td>Video describing the SEL 3 Signature Practices (welcoming inclusion activity, engaging practices, and optimistic closure) and how to use them in before and after school settings.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SOURCE:</strong></td>
<td>CASEL</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TAGS</strong></td>
<td>three signature practices, building community, out of school</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SEL Discussion Series for Parents and Caregivers</strong></td>
<td>8 facilitated discussions to support schools to engage families in conversations about the social and emotional growth of their families. Each session encourages participants to engage in their own growth while supporting their children to practice SEL. Also available in Spanish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOURCE:</strong></td>
<td>CASEL</td>
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<td><strong>TAGS</strong></td>
<td>parents/parenting, SEL partnerships, toolkit, parent leadership, culturally responsive, family and community engagement</td>
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**RELATED RESOURCES**

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<tr>
<td><strong>Serie de Discusión de SEL para Padres y Cuidadores</strong></td>
<td>Spanish version of SEL Discussion Series for Parents and Caregivers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SOURCE:</strong></td>
<td>CASEL</td>
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CASEL’s SEL for Parents (English)
Video describes SEL for a parent audience and provides strategies to bring SEL into the home, aligned with the 5 SEL competencies. Features schools in Chicago and includes interviews with parents and caregivers.

SOURCE: CASEL

TAGS: videos, parents/parenting, social awareness, self awareness, self management, relationship skills, responsible decision making, SEL competence, SEL overview, out of school, family and community engagement

RELATED RESOURCES

CASEL’s SEL for Parents (Spanish)
Video in Spanish describes SEL for a parent audience and provides strategies to bring SEL into the home, aligned with the 5 SEL competencies. Features schools in Chicago and includes interviews with parents and caregivers.

SOURCE: CASEL

TAGS: videos, parents/parenting, Spanish language resources, social awareness, self awareness, self management, relationship skills, responsible decision making, SEL competence, SEL overview, out of school, family and community engagement

School Climate Survey for Families
Sacramento City Unified School District used this 2 page survey to gather family members’ perspectives about school culture, equity, and the quality of interactions with school staff. It has been translated into 5 other languages at www.scusd.edu/post/2019-school-climate-survey-families.

SOURCE: Sacramento City Unified School District

TAGS: family partnerships, community relations, culture and climate, family and community engagement

Growth Mindset Workshop for Parents
Presentation slides, handout, and facilitator’s guide to lead a parent workshop about the Growth Mindset, from Transforming Education. Also available in Spanish.

SOURCE: Transforming Education

TAGS: reading lists - parents, parents/parenting, family and community engagement

IDRA’s Family and Community Engagement Survey
This survey can be used to assess a school’s effectiveness in partnering with families and communities around student achievement, access & equity, organizational support, and quality of interactions. Also available in Spanish.

SOURCE: University/Nonprofit Research Institution

TAGS: assessment, community relations, family and community engagement

Key considerations for districts as they build a council consisting of members from different organizations and departments to align social and emotional learning between in-school and out-of-school time settings.

*SOURCE:* CASEL

**TAGS** community partnerships, community relations, out of school

Raising Caring, Confident, Capable Children (brochure)

Brochure for parents and caregivers providing an overview of SEL, 10 practices to use at home to foster SEL, and ideas for engaging with the school's SEL initiatives.

*SOURCE:* Illinois DOE

**TAGS** parents/parenting, parent leadership, SEL overview, family and community engagement

Partnerships by Design: Cultivating Effective and Meaningful School-Family-Community Partnerships

This tool from Northwest REL includes forms, worksheets, and activities to assess the current state of family and community collaboration, create a vision for partnership, and set up an action plan.

*SOURCE:* Northwest REL

**TAGS** family partnerships, community partnerships, anti-bias, parents/parenting, toolkit, parent leadership, culturally responsive, family and community engagement

Partnering with Community Organizations to Support SEL

This tool from CASEL's Guide to Schoolwide SEL describes 3 main ways schools can partner with community organizations: by bringing partners into the school, linking families with their resources, and organizing community-based experiences for students.

*SOURCE:* CASEL

**TAGS** community partnerships, SEL partnerships, toolkit, MTSS, SEL leadership

Social and Emotional Learning Practices: A Self-Reflection Tool for Afterschool Staff

Part of AIR's Beyond the Bell series, this tool aimed at out-of-school time staff includes reflections on social practices, program implementation practices, and personal SEL competencies, built upon the framework of 10 practices that promote social and emotional learning.

*SOURCE:* AIR

**TAGS** SEL partnerships, reading lists - staff, SEL competence, implementation plan, conducting local SEL research, continuous improvement, out of school, professional learning
Guiding Questions for Building Strong Partnerships between School Day and Out-of-School Time Educators

This tool from CASEL's Guide to Schoolwide SEL provides questions to help the SEL team think intentionally about how to fully partner with OST providers to promote SEL.

SOURCE: CASEL

TAGS community partnerships  SEL partnerships  community relations  out of school  SEL leadership

The In-School and Afterschool Social Emotional Learning Connection: A Planning Tool

Tool for afterschool and in-school staff first to reflect independently on their goals for SEL and think about what is being done in each setting to support SEL, then to discuss how to work collaboratively toward a common goal.

SOURCE: AIR

TAGS community partnerships  SEL partnerships  building community  MTSS  out of school  planning

Strategies for Establishing School-Family Partnerships

This tool from CASEL's Guide to Schoolwide SEL outlines the components of a meaningful partnership that involves family members in their child's social and emotional development and in schoolwide decision making about SEL, and proposes strategies for bridging constraints and communication gaps.

SOURCE: CASEL

TAGS family partnerships  parents/parenting  SEL partnerships  toolkit  parent leadership

Key Responsibilities of a School-Family Partnership Lead

This tool from CASEL's Guide to Schoolwide SEL defines the role of a parent leader who is a member of the school's SEL team and coordinator of school-family partnerships. Also available in Spanish.

SOURCE: CASEL

TAGS family partnerships  parents/parenting  SEL partnerships  toolkit  parent leadership

culturally responsive communications family and community engagement
RELATED RESOURCES

**Responsabilidades de un Líder entre Escuela-Familia**
Spanish version of Key Responsibilities of a School-Family Partnership Lead

**SOURCE:** CASEL

**TAGS** family partnerships parents/parenting SEL partnerships toolkit

**spanish language resources** parent leadership culturally responsive communications

**family and community engagement**

**Ideas and Tools for Working with Parents and Families**
Packet describing benefits and strategies for school-family partnerships in developing social and emotional skills; includes handouts for families and overviews of SEL programs that incorporate activities for families.

**SOURCE:** CASEL

**TAGS** reading lists - parents parents/parenting SEL partnerships toolkit community relations

**family and community engagement**

**Student-led Conferences Introduction**
Overview of a Nashville middle school's model for student-led conferences, appropriate for grades 4-12.

**SOURCE:** Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

**TAGS** student assessment teacher tool toolkit self awareness student leadership advisory/homeroom middle school grades classroom level family and community engagement youth voice

**RELATED RESOURCES**

**Student Reflection Sheet for Student-Led Conferences**
Reflection sheet for students to complete after student-led conferences.

**SOURCE:** Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

**Student Achievement Support Plan**
Example template for a student/family/school agreement, for use during student-led conferences. Addresses support needed for growth in academics, perseverance, ownership, and critical thinking.

**SOURCE:** Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools
Family/Guest Reflection and Information Sharing Response Sheet for Student-Led Conferences
Handout for family members and caregivers to use at student-led conferences, with suggested questions to prompt students to share about their portfolio and a reflection to reinforce students and give feedback.

SOURCE: Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

Student-Led Conferences Preparation Lesson Plans
Sample lesson plan to help students prepare for student-led conferences, includes a peer feedback rubric.

SOURCE: Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

Student Script and Agenda for a Student-Led Conference
Tool for students to prepare to lead conferences with their parents and teachers, including a checklist and sample script for students to talk about their strengths, challenges, and work portfolio.

SOURCE: Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

Student-Led Conferences Teacher To-Do
Timeline and checklist for teachers to prepare for student-led conferences

SOURCE: Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

Student-Led Conferences Parent Letter
Sample letter to inform families and build anticipation for student-led conferences.

SOURCE: Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

The Basics of Student-Led Conferences
Memo for teachers to explain the purpose and logistics for student-led conferences.

SOURCE: Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

Student-Led Conferencing Faculty Handbook (Nashville)
Nashville's handbook for student-led conferences describes in detail the role of students, teachers, families, and the school in making the conferences successful, student-centered, and useful.

SOURCE: Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

Find presentation templates that you can adapt and use
**Bilingual Parent/Community Introduction to SEL**
An activity-rich, fully bilingual 45 minute presentation to introduce the larger school community to SEL. Includes slides, a detailed facilitator guide, and a planning template for adapting the presentation.

**SOURCE:**
CASEL

**TAGS** parents/parenting  
   social awareness  
   self awareness  
   self management  
   relationship skills  
   responsible decision making  
   SEL competence  
   SEL overview  
   out of school  
   family and community engagement

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**RELATED RESOURCES**

**Facilitator notes for activities**
An activity-rich, fully bilingual 45 minute presentation to introduce the larger school community to SEL. Includes slides, a detailed facilitator guide, and a planning template for adapting the presentation.

**Adapting for my context organizer**
An activity-rich, fully bilingual 45 minute presentation to introduce the larger school community to SEL. Includes slides, a detailed facilitator guide, and a planning template for adapting the presentation.

**SOURCE:**
CASEL

**CASEL Parent SEL Foundations Intro Facilitator Agenda**
An activity-rich, fully bilingual 45 minute presentation to introduce the larger school community to SEL. Includes slides, a detailed facilitator guide, and a planning template for adapting the presentation.

**SOURCE:**
CASEL

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See artifacts shared by districts and schools

**TITLE**

**Relate 918 – Tulsa’s Partnership with The Opportunity Project**
Relate 918 is a joint initiative of Tulsa Public Schools and The Opportunity Project to build life skills for students both during and after school. The Opportunity Project is Tulsa’s expanded learning partner.

**SOURCE:** Tulsa Public Schools

**TAGS** community partnerships  
   SEL partnerships  
   out of school
Chicago Student Code of Conduct (video)
This short video helps students and their families understand Chicago’s student code of conduct and highlights the district’s SEL-infused approach to student discipline.

SOURCE: Chicago Public Schools
TAGS alternatives to suspension restorative practices student discipline

RELATED RESOURCES

Chicago Student Code of Conduct (video with Spanish subtitles)
Spanish subtitled version of Chicago’s Student Code of Conduct overview video.

SOURCE: Chicago Public Schools
TAGS spanish language resources

Teacher Interview: How do Families Respond to SEL? (video)
A 5th grade teacher from Anchorage speaks about how she introduces SEL to families, has students share their learning with their families, and hears feedback from families about how they see the impact of SEL at home.

SOURCE: Anchorage Public Schools
TAGS videos SEL partnerships teacher training building buy-in for SEL family and community engagement

SEL Partnership between Denver Public Schools and the Denver After-school Alliance
2 page flyer summarizing the plan for infusing evidence-based SEL throughout all grade levels in schools, afterschool, and in summer programs throughout Denver.

SOURCE: Denver Public Schools
TAGS community partnerships SEL partnerships SEL overview out of school family and community engagement

Social-Emotional Learning in Expanded Learning Programs
Sacramento’s 2 page flyer summarizing common goals between schools and expanded learning opportunities, and the importance of working together as partners.

SOURCE: Sacramento City Unified School District
TAGS SEL partnerships SEL overview community relations out of school family and community engagement
Examples of Community Collaboration for SEL Implementation
Austin's 1 pager describing 3 SEL-focused partnerships with community organizations and programs.

SOURCE: Austin Independent School District
TAGS arts SEL partnerships community relations out of school family and community engagement

Find resources to help you learn more on this topic

Relationships First: Creating Connections that Help Young People Thrive
Young people deeply benefit from developmental relationships with a variety of people including program leaders from community organizations, mentors, parents, teachers, and friends. This resource lays out a framework for building strong relationships with young people, and concludes with 55 concrete ideas.

SOURCE: Search Institute
TAGS family partnerships community partnerships relationship skills advisory/homeroom

Parenting for Competence and Parenting With Competence- Essential Connections Between Parenting and Social and Emotional Learning
In this 2018 study, Miller, Wanless & Weissberg examined how professionals in the field of SEL translate between their professional knowledge and their personal parenting practices and priorities for their children's development. Responses are analyzed and compared to the CASEL 5 competency framework.

SOURCE: Research Journal
TAGS family partnerships reading lists - parents parents/parenting

The Afterschool Guide to Social and Emotional Learning
This Ebook compiles more than 20 articles and studies describing SEL practice in the afterschool environment, partnerships with schools to strengthen SEL practice, and examples of afterschool programs that support SEL. Requires free registration to access.

SOURCE: National Afterschool Association
TAGS community partnerships SEL partnerships out of school

Social and Emotional Learning in Out-of-School Time Settings
Brief from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the Wallace Foundation providing guidelines and considerations for adapting leading SEL programs to out-of-school settings.

SOURCE: Wallace Foundation
TAGS SEL partnerships research brief evidence-based programs out of school
Finding Common Ground: Connecting Social-Emotional Learning During and Beyond the School Day
Brief from the Partnership for Children and Youth providing language and strategies to support alignment between schools and expanded learning programs to impact SEL, featuring examples from San Francisco Unified School District.

TAGS: SEL partnerships, research brief, MTSS, out of school

Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships
A framework for creating the right conditions for engagement and designing scaffolded family engagement initiatives that build capacity for both educators and families to partner to support students. Includes 3 school and district case studies.

SOURCE: AIR
TAGS: family partnerships, community partnerships, parents/parenting, parent leadership, research brief, culturally responsive, community relations, family and community engagement

School-Family Partnership Strategies to Enhance Children’s Social, Emotional, and Academic Growth
This brief provides educators with strategies and examples to build and nurture successful school-family partnerships and create an engaging and supportive climate for learning in school and at home.

SOURCE: CASEL
TAGS: family partnerships, parents/parenting, SEL partnerships, parent leadership, research brief, culturally responsive, community relations, family and community engagement

In Oakland, Reinventing School Policing
Article and video about Oakland schools' partnership with police and special SEL training for school-based officers.

SOURCE: Oakland Unified School District
TAGS: community partnerships, alternatives to suspension, anti-bias, SEL partnerships, relationship skills, restorative practices, building community, student discipline

Webinar: The Role of Family and Community Partnerships in School-based Social and Emotional Learning Programs
Includes findings from the Social and Emotional Learning Interventions Under the ESSA: Evidence Review, focusing specifically on what the review found related to family and community engagement, and a presentation from a district administrator. Hosted by REL Northeast & Islands

SOURCE: REL Northeast & Islands
TAGS: family partnerships, community partnerships, SEL partnerships, parent leadership, evidence-based programs, community relations, out of school, family and community engagement
Parenting Montana
Montana's site focused on parenting and SEL, with tools to address challenges parents mention most. Age-specific tools guide parents through a process of seeking their child's input, interactive modeling, practice, support, and reinforcement.

SOURCE: Montana's Department of Public Health and Human Services
TAGS  reading lists - parents  parents/parenting  SEL partnerships  toolkit  parent leadership  PK-12
family and community engagement

Helping Children and Youth Cope with Stressful Events
New York City's 2 page flyer for parents and caregivers with tips for supporting children and teens who have directly or indirectly experienced a stressful event or trauma.

SOURCE: New York City
TAGS  mental health  trauma  reading lists - parents  parents/parenting  PK-12
family and community engagement

Parent Toolkit: Social & Emotional Development
Collection of short articles for parents about ways to develop social and emotional skills at home for a range of ages, available in English and Spanish, from NBC News.

SOURCE: External website
TAGS  reading lists - parents  videos  parents/parenting  toolkit  spanish language resources
social awareness  self awareness  self management  relationship skills  responsible decision making
building buy-in for SEL