

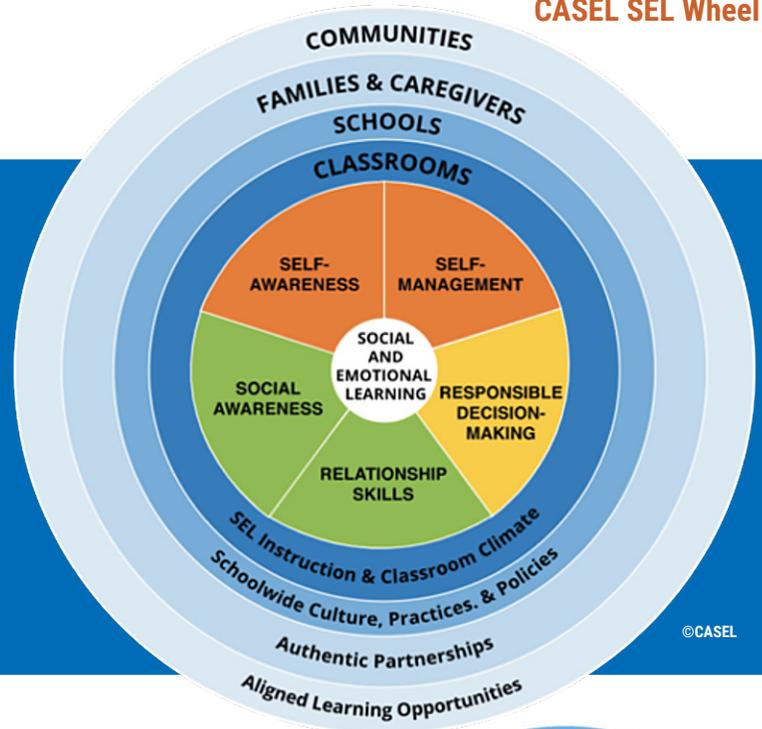
Social and Emotional Learning

What is SEL?

The [Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#), describes Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as:

“...an integral part of education and human development. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.”

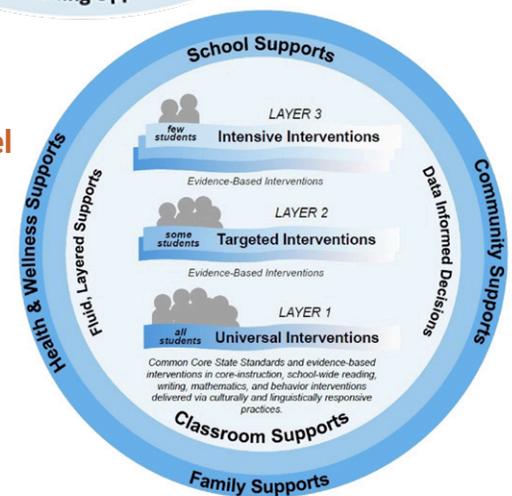
CASEL SEL Wheel



The Multi-Layered System of Supports (MLSS) manual states that the goals of SEL are defined as “the cognitive, affective and behavioral competencies necessary for students to be successful in school, work, and life.” (NM MLSS Manual 2020, p. 23.)

Consider the similarities between CASEL’s SEL Wheel and the MLSS model.

MLSS Model



The SEL competencies are:

- » Self-awareness
- » Self-management
- » Social awareness
- » Responsible decision-making
- » Relationship skills

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At each layer of the school’s MLSS framework, these competencies should be explicitly taught, modeled and practiced by all adults and all students. Let’s take a deeper dive into each of the SEL competencies.

Self-awareness

A widely agreed-upon definition of self-awareness is demonstration of one’s ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values along with the ability to understand how they impact one’s own behavior. Additionally, self-awareness encompasses an individual’s ability to accurately assess his/her own strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a growth mindset. (mylearningtools.org) Daniel Goleman, the father of Emotional Intelligence, says that self-awareness means that one can recognize one’s own emotions (emotional awareness); that an individual knows his/her strengths and limitations (self-assessment); and an individual has a strong sense of self-worth or self-confidence.

Self-Management

Self-management is the ability to regulate emotions, thoughts and behaviors when faced with a variety of situations. Self-management includes managing stress, controlling impulses and self-motivation, including setting and working toward goals. A person who is skilled in self-management has the ability to keep disruptive urges under control, is flexible and handles change well, has initiative to apply him/herself to new opportunities, and demonstrates perseverance and grit when faced with barriers or obstacles.

Social Awareness

A big part of social awareness is the willingness to understand the perspective of and demonstrate empathy

for others from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Additionally, when a person can understand social rules for behavior and adjust behaviors based on interactions with others, he/she will have successful relationships. Someone who is socially aware will demonstrate empathy and will intuit others’ needs, concerns and feelings and will respond accordingly.

Responsible Decision-Making

CASEL defines responsible decision-making as “the ability to make positive and constructive decisions about how to behave based on the knowledge of what is right and wrong as well as social norms and safety concerns.” Responsible decision-making includes making choices in everyday life that are both personally and socially responsible. Someone who is engaged in responsible decision-making will identify problems; evaluate the consequences of his/her actions; consider his/her actions and the impact they may have on others; solve problems in appropriate ways; and reflect on his/her actions.

Relationship Skills

An individual demonstrates relationship skills by establishing and maintaining healthy relationships, and through properly navigating interactions with diverse groups or individuals.

One who has competent relationship skills will:

- » Communicate clearly,
- » Be a skilled listener,
- » Work cooperatively with others, and
- » Provide support for or seek help from others when necessary.

Social and Emotional Learning encompasses the skills students need to appropriately respond to daily life activities and human interactions. It is crucial that these competencies be thoughtfully and explicitly taught using schoolwide routines and learning opportunities that leverage the expertise and experiences of district/school personnel in collaboration with families and community resources. According to Dr. Lauren J. Bierbaum,

“Social-emotional learning is how we develop our identities as learners and as individuals.”

OTHER RESOURCES:

The [website of CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning](#), has lots of information about SEL, including links to webinars, research, and examples of SEL practices in school districts across the country.

Access to more information about [Adverse Childhood Experiences, prevention strategies and other resources](#), may be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.

To discover [lessons and videos to help with SEL strategies](#) in your school or district, access the SEL Made Simple website.

The New Mexico Social and Emotional Learning Framework and MLSS

CONTRIBUTOR: Leslie G. Kelly, MA,
Behavioral Health Coordinator, NM PED

Comprehensive and integrated SEL has a positive impact on both behavior and academics within the MLSS structure.

BEHAVIOR: SEL provides students with the foundational competencies that they need in order to follow behavioral expectations, reflect on and learn from mistakes, navigate complex relationships, and ultimately make responsible decisions.

ACADEMICS: Learning is a social and emotional process. For this reason, students are most successful academically when they:

1. Know themselves and can manage themselves;
2. Take the perspective of others and relate effectively with them; and
3. Make sound choices about personal and social decisions.

(Durlak et.al., eds., *Social and Emotional Learning: Research and Practice*, 2015, p. 7.)



*The framework provided here is a draft of the final framework to be released in December 2020.

NM SEL Framework Implementation

The New Mexico Social and Emotional Learning Framework* identifies the following key components necessary to implement comprehensive schoolwide SEL.

Positive Developmental Relationships

A learning environment that is supportive, culturally responsive and focused on meaningful connection, relationships and building community.

Intentional Development of Skills, Mindsets and Habits

Students have consistent opportunities to cultivate, practice and reflect on social and emotional competencies in a way that is developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive.

Rich Instructional Experiences

SEL content and objectives are integrated into rigorous instruction through interactive and collaborative pedagogies.

Environments Filled with Safety and Belonging

Conditions for belonging and emotional safety are created by being responsive to students' perspectives and needs, affirming all students' full identities, and establishing structures that create predictability and consistency.

Integrated Systems of Supports

SEL is seamlessly integrated into a continuum of academic and behavior supports, which are available to ensure that all student needs are met.

Use of Data to Assess Need and Impact

Implementation and outcome data are collected and used to monitor progress toward goals and continuously improve all SEL-related systems, practices, and policies with a focus on equity.

The following shows the relationship between the NM SEL Framework and the MLSS layers.

MLSS LAYER 3 Intensive Interventions

This layer provides students with more frequent and intense individualized or small-group targeted SEL interventions and skill development.

3

MLSS LAYER 2 Targeted Interventions

This layer provides students with more focused supports in academics, SEL, small-group instruction, SEL skill development, student-centered discipline and restorative practices.

2

MLSS LAYER 1 Universal Interventions

Universal supports expose all students to these experiences outlined in the NM SEL Framework:

- » Positive relationships;
- » Intentional skill development, mindsets and habits;
- » Rich instructional experiences;
- » Environments filled with safety and belonging; and
- » Use of data to assess need and impact.

1

Integration of SEL in multiple existing systems, policies, procedures and academic and behavioral supports creates a more streamlined and effective approach to supporting all students. When we address the social and emotional needs of all students and staff, we provide more opportunities for social and academic success.



Social and Emotional Learning from a Distance: How Do We Do it?

In September 2020, Hanover Research conducted a survey of parents, teachers and students focusing on their experiences with online or hybrid learning. Of the 1,039 respondents, 25% cited social and emotional needs as an area for future emphasis. Of those surveyed, the following specific perceptions were also stated:

- » Students' emotional health is lowest among those participating in an online learning environment.
- » Satisfaction with social and emotional supports for students and staff is lowest among those in online learning environments.

These statistics are troubling but not surprising. Teachers across the state of New Mexico fully understand that Social and Emotional Learning is fundamental for the students they work with. However, many struggle to find specific ways to address SEL during remote learning. There are many SEL activities available online for teachers to use during remote learning, and the following are a few recommendations.



1. Assess the ways you are currently addressing SEL with your students in remote or hybrid learning. Once you have a baseline of how you are explicitly teaching the SEL competencies (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making), you can make deliberate plans to focus more on the areas where your students may need more support, and embed SEL every day in your lesson plans.
2. Take the initiative to make purposeful efforts to build relationships with your students during your synchronous learning. Ask your students questions such as:

- » What would you like to learn more about this year (week, month)?
- » What do you need most from me to help you learn?
- » What are we doing well during our time together?
- » What do we need to improve during our time together?

These types of questions will promote student engagement and positive relationships. They will also support students' academic and social needs.



Here is a [Social and Emotional Competencies Checklist from Trauma-Sensitive Schools](#) that may be useful as a self-assessment.



- Strengthen students' social awareness and relationship skills by using Culture Boxes. Ask your students to collect artifacts like photographs, family recipes, descriptions of family traditions, etc. Have students place these artifacts in a Culture Box to share with their classmates during remote learning. This relationship-building activity can also be extended to a Classroom Culture Box and can be used in writing activities.

To learn more about [Culture Boxes](#), connect to this [Panorama Education](#) resource.

- Use virtual learning prompts to explicitly teach responsible decision-making. Use scenarios that relate directly to remote learning experiences. Here's a sample scenario: Gina is bored during her online class discussion and decides to turn off her camera and mute herself so that she can watch videos and text her friends. What can Gina do differently to fully engage during her online learning? Have students identify the problem and then articulate alternate behaviors to solve the problem.

Teachers can create or locate prompts online that will describe scenarios for other topics such as showing respect, demonstrating self-control, or staying on task during instruction.

For another example of a responsible-decision-making activity, click here to access the [decision-making wheel from Australia's education.gov website](#).

When considering an important decision, start by stating the problem in the hub of the wheel and move through the following segments.



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We know from current research, from the NM MLSS Manual and from experiences in our own classrooms that SEL must be planned and explicitly taught, especially during remote learning. Making connections with students is extremely important, but SEL goes beyond conversations. Teachers have a great opportunity to improve these life skills with their students—even in an online environment—by planning focused lessons each day on the SEL competencies.

OTHER RESOURCES

Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) in conjunction with UNM Health Services offers a lot of resources to support educators when implementing SEL during their lessons. Follow this link to watch a video about [connecting with your students and their environment in the virtual setting](#).

The Department of Education in Indiana has created an [SEL Toolkit for Administrators and Educators](#).

Read the full [National Survey on School District Operations from Hanover Research](#).

A School Leader's Story: Leading Staff SEL in the Remote Environment

Ask any teacher in New Mexico about remote learning and you will hear a litany of comments. Some are beautiful stories about students who were less engaged in face-to-face classrooms but seem to shine in the synchronous learning environment. Others describe the joy in students' faces when they share part of their lives with their teachers and classmates during an online lesson.



Hatch Elementary School
Principal Amber Perry

However, there are also more troublesome stories about students who are not attending online classes or about students' learning loss and the helpless feeling teachers get when trying to address the ever-widening learning gaps.

Arguably more disheartening are the family traumas and social and emotional effects that remote learning has had on students. The effects of these situations coupled with personal stories, isolation and anxieties have caused many teachers to experience emotions that have never been felt as strongly as in the 2020 school year.

These issues are challenging, but a skillful and caring school leader can create the conditions for teachers and staff to address these issues head-on and maintain a productive and positive remote learning environment. This is one principal's story about how she addressed SEL issues with her staff.

Amber Perry is the principal at Hatch Valley Elementary School in the Hatch Valley Public Schools District. The community is a tight-knit agricultural one; the school staff know their students and families well and are committed to education. Amber is also part of the RISE (Resilience, Instruction, Support and Excellence) Leadership program designed by the NM PED Priority Schools Bureau.

Ms. Perry meets weekly with her teachers in Professional Learning Communities online. She praises the fact that teachers have used this time to study student data in depth. However, Amber noticed an underlying negativity emerging from some teachers during these discussions, and she became very concerned about the mental health of her staff.

Amber had read an article about "toxic positivity" that struck a chord with her. In a nutshell, the concept of toxic positivity is defined as the avoidance of addressing the sticky issues that cause us stress and anxiety by using platitudes such as, "It could be worse" or "Everything is going to be OK." As Amber reflected on this article, she realized that her job as a leader involved more than just being a cheerleader to encourage her teachers to "keep their chins up." She realized had to act.

One of her required readings for RISE is the book *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*. Chapter 9 discusses choosing your focus. One quote there from Deepak Chopra (p. 173) states,

“...life is a series of scenes revealing themselves; in every moment, we decide where to place our attention. Focusing on negative, painful, troubling events can become habitual.”

After reading this chapter, Amber decided to address the SEL issues with her own staff during the next PLC meetings to help them establish tools to combat habitual, negative thinking.

She shared her learning about this chapter with her staff in discussions, posing questions such as,

“What are negative concerns that are consuming your thoughts?
What might be causing those thoughts?
How do we get away from the negativity?”

The questions were real and raw and provided a safe forum for teachers and staff to discuss personal issues: their health and the health of their families; feeling overwhelmed with the stress of remote teaching; the anxiety of hopelessness caused by the unknown in regards to COVID-19; and the deep concerns they had for their students' mental health. The discussion did not end there.

Many of these issues were worrisome but also out of the control of the teachers, so the next question Amber asked the staff was,

“How do we move away from the negative thoughts?”

She led them through a discussion about resources. The book *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others* reminds the reader that we all have resources: moments, people, places, and experiences that bring us peace and joy. Amber asked her staff to list the resources they have to which they can turn during times of stress. As the teachers and staff began listing resources, they also began articulating specific ways to manage their stress and even support each other in the process. Each PLC became an exercise in mental healing and empathy for the staff.

Amber learned a lot about herself as a leader as well. She learned that, although she must be positive and supportive as leader, she is also responsible for creating the conditions for her staff to address sensitive issues. She chose to do this during her PLC time, which allowed staff to feel validated for the feelings they were experiencing; gave them an appropriate forum and peer group with whom to share; and, most importantly, provided them with tools to mitigate the concerns and remove barriers, which ultimately affected the success of teachers and their students. With these actions, Amber Perry skillfully and compassionately demonstrated how to lead teachers through their own social and emotional battles.

OTHER RESOURCES:

Read an article from [The Psychology Group that describes more about the concept of toxic positivity, its signs, and how to use more accepting language.](#)

Watch [Simon Sinek's TED Talk about empathy and leadership.](#)



WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT MLSS?

[View current guidance and access online resources.](#)

CONTACT:

Kenneth Stowe

NM Multi-Layered System of Supports

(505) 412-9979

multi.layeredss@state.nm.us