SEL Case Study Project

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CPRD

INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Background

The goal of the Illinois State Board of Education's Social and Emotional Learning Standards (SEL) is to contribute to the academic and social well-being of Illinois children attending public schools. Such well-being is understood as vital in its own right, as well as integrally related to improving students' attitudes toward school, academic performance, and chances for success in adulthood. SEL also seeks to promote school environments that are perceived by students, teachers, and parents as safe, caring, well-managed, and participatory. At the individual level, SEL seeks to develop students' skills in relation to self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, positive relationships, and responsible decision-making.

The Center for Prevention Research and Development (CPRD) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, contracting with the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership and Voices for Illinois Children, is conducting a statewide evaluation of the readiness and planning phases of SEL project implementation for a subset of those schools receiving grants to facilitate this process. The study is known as the SEL Case Study Project. The primary informants for these school-level and process-based case studies are SEL Team members, school administrators, and members of the coaching cadre.

The purpose of the evaluation, consisting of 21 case studies of individual school SEL Teams, is to assess the progress of each school-based SEL Team in reaching its preliminary readiness and planning goals, and in some cases to report on the early impacts of SEL implementation. Obstacles and barriers to effective SEL implementation were also explored. Both funders and practitioners are being provided feedback regarding preparatory and first-year experiences in grant application, training, team-building, collaboration, teacher and community buy-in, curriculum adoption, and other foundational prerequisites for a successful and sustainable school-wide SEL program. In addition, the findings from the Case Study Project that are based on these 21 implementation efforts may more broadly inform feedback to SEL Teams, school administrators, regional offices, and state planners, as well as assist evaluators in refining their methodological and analytical strategies for future studies.

Procedures

Sample of SEL Sites

Over 85 schools in Illinois were funded to plan and begin implementation of SEL standards at their schools during the 2007-2008 school year. Working with the Voices for Illinois Children staff, during the summer of 2008, CPRD selected a subset of 27 schools to participate in the evaluation. The schools were purposely selected to represent the different geographical regions of the state, different community sizes, different developmental levels of SEL programming, and having a diverse combination of other initiatives in place at the school. Of the 27 schools selected to participate in the Case Study Project, ultimately 21 of these participated in the evaluation. In some cases, the schools that refused had recently gone through a period of transition and did not feel prepared to engage in the case study process. In other cases, the school's principal declined participation because he/she believed that SEL was still in its very early stages of development – too early for team members to reflect upon experiences and accomplishments.

The evaluation included both quantitative as well as qualitative sources of data, and each source is described below.

Archival Data

Three sources of archival data were collected for each of the selected SEL study sites: 1) community-level census data, 2) school-level School Report Card data from ISBE, and 3) rubric ratings completed by SEL coaches for each of the teams they work with.

At the community level for schools other than Chicago Public Schools, demographic and economic data were drawn from www.citi-data.com, searchable by Illinois cities and counties. Demographic and economic data pertaining to Chicago Community Areas were drawn from the U.S. Census and Chicago Public School Records, by way of the Consortium on Chicago School Research, searchable by Community Area at http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/web_reports/Schoolageenvironment/index.html. Variables of interest included community size, poverty level, and levels of education.

For all schools in the SEL study, data pertaining to the school's enrollment size, student demographics, district finance, and overall academic performance were drawn from 2007 Illinois School Report Cards, searchable by city, district, or school, and accessible at http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite. Each School Report Card includes state-level as well as school- and district-level rates, averages, and scores.

Rubric Ratings

CASEL has developed a rubric for school-wide SEL implementation, which delineates a sequence of 10 implementation steps and a set of 6 ongoing sustainability factors that help to enrich and sustain SEL programming across all steps in the process. The rubric is designed to help teams understand where they are in the full process, where they might go next, and some ideas for how best to get there. The rubric rating tool is designed not only for assessment, but also to promote learning among team members. It is understood that the 10 implementation steps reflect a complex process of change that does not always follow the order of the steps as presented in the rubric.

Again, the ratings are of each site's performance based on 10 implementation steps and 6 sustainability factors. Rubric ratings were done twice during the initial year of the grant, once in the fall and again in the spring. In the analyses performed for this report, only the spring 2008 rubric ratings are used. These ratings provide a summary of each site's performance after the initial year of planning. The process for completing the rubric ratings may not have been identical across the sites. At some of the sites, it appears that the coach made the ratings. At other sites, it looks as if all team members may have had input into the ratings, and then an average value was calculated. Ratings were made on a 4-point scale, with 4=fully functional level of development or implementation, 3=mostly functional level of development or implementation, 2=limited development or partial implementation, and 1=little or no development and implementation.

Surveys & Focus Groups

The principal at each selected school was initially contacted by e-mail and invited by the CPRD evaluation team to participate in an on-site visit and focus group with SEL Team members. After the e-mail, a follow-up phone call was made to the principal to answer questions, obtain written consent, and schedule the visit. Site visits were to include as many SEL Team members as possible: teachers, administrators, staff, and parents—all of whom participated in the planning process and the first year of

implementation. During the site visit, the CPRD evaluation team member administered the written survey and conducted the focus group with available team members. (Copies of the surveys and focus group questions are attached.) Each visit lasted approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. At the start of the visit, consent forms were reviewed and then signed by each team member participating in the focus group. In addition to the focus group discussion, those teachers, administrators, staff, and parents who participated in the planning process and first year implementation were also asked to complete a brief survey. Surveys were generally administered to team members at the start of the focus group. The Administrator Surveys were left with the team leader, along with a postage-paid pre-addressed return envelope so that the principals could complete the survey at their leisure. In a few cases when only very limited amounts of time were available for the focus group, all Team Member Surveys were distributed in advance with postage-paid pre-addressed return envelopes so that team members could complete the survey at their convenience, thereby leaving more time for the focus group discussion during the site visit.

Survey items addressed perceptions of training and coaching, attitudes toward SEL, and early SEL implementation experiences. The focus groups were conducted by members of the CPRD evaluation team following established protocols. Focus group questions and discussion points were similar to the survey content, though the discussion format allowed for a more in-depth exploration and understanding of these areas. Focus group discussions followed a standard list of questions and discussion points. In this way, as much consistency as possible was maintained among the four CPRD evaluation team members, each of whom conducted several focus groups on their own.

A focus group report was written for each group conducted, and the report was sent to the SEL Team leader for review and comment. Once approval was obtained from the team, the focus group reports became a central source of data for the Case Study Project with key concepts, examples, and innovations being extracted from each of the individual reports for the larger, overall summary report.

Coach Interviews

A final component of the Case Study Project was coach interviews. A subset of 8 SEL coaches working with the 27 schools was asked to participate in an in-depth, semi-structured telephone interview. The coaches working with the largest number of SEL Teams were selected so that the interviews would capture experiences from the broadest sample of teams. Coaches were contacted by e-mail and invited to participate. All coaches contacted agreed to participate. The interviews were scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time, and a copy of the interview protocol was sent to the coach. (A copy of the interview protocol is attached.) The coach interviews focused on knowledge and experience in the areas of SEL and school-based coaching, experiences as a coach, obstacles and barriers faced, and resources and supports provided by the project funders.

Analysis Plan

The first step in the analysis was the preparation of site visit reports. Site reports based on focus group discussions each followed the same outline:

- Background and Introduction
- Community and School Overview (based on archival data & site visitor observation)
- History and Background of SEL Planning and Implementation
- About the SEL Team

- Resources that Support SEL
- Early SEL Design and Implementation
- Obstacles and Barriers to SEL Implementation
- Impacts of SEL
- Summary

After the focus group reports were written, reviewed, and approved by the site, revisions to the reports were made as needed. A list of "key concepts" was identified, every focus group report was then carefully reviewed, and the examples of the key concepts were tagged and pulled into a single key concepts document. With this extensive list of key concepts, together the evaluation team reviewed all relevant text, quotes, and site examples. Generally, each key concept required 1 to 1.5 hours to review, discuss, and summarize. The goal of these in-depth evaluation team discussions was to formulate conclusions and recommendations based on the focus group discussions across all of the sites visited.

In addition to this qualitative analysis process, more quantitative analyses were also conducted using archival and survey data and the rubric ratings. All sources of archival and survey data were linked by a site ID number that was created by the evaluators. In this way, all sources of data could be linked in the analysis phase of the project. Survey data, though anonymous, was labeled with site ID numbers and scanned. Several item scales were created based on theory, and item intercorrelations and reliabilities were run. For all variables assessed on the surveys, basic descriptive statistics (frequencies, range, means, and standard deviations) were calculated. Mean comparisons were made for various subgroups, and correlational analyses were run for some of the key variables. The open-ended survey responses were coded, and different types of responses were counted and summarized.

The evaluation questions addressed included the following:

1. What background characteristics define those schools with the biggest buy-in from building administrators? Are these schools / teams / communities different than those with the least buy-in?
2. What are the characteristics of sites with the most positive attitudes toward SEL?
3. What are the characteristics of sites that are furthest along with implementation steps?
4. What are the characteristics of sites with the highest sustainability ratings?

Findings

In this section of the report, findings from the cross-site analysis of focus group discussions and the analyses of survey responses are presented. In addition, census data, school report card data, rubric ratings, and coach interviews are also summarized. We begin with an overview of sites participating in the evaluation project, including the respondents who completed the surveys at those sites.

Overview of SEL Sites in the Sample and Survey Respondents

Focus group discussions and survey administration occurred at 21 SEL sites. The following table presents an overview of school and community characteristics for the 21 SEL sites participating in the evaluation, that is, the SEL Study sites.

Table 1. Overview of SEL Sites Participating in the Evaluation[*] (n=21)

Overview of Schools					
Group / Variable	n	Mean Enrollment (Range)	Range of Race / Ethnicity	Range of Low Income	Attained AYP[**]
Elementary / Middle Schools	15	406 (140-699)	0-100% White 0-100% Black 0-67% Latino	6-98%	11 Yes 4 No
High Schools	6	2137 (1245-4461)	2-80% White 12-64% Black 1-64% Latino	2-99%	2 Yes 4 No
Overview of Villages, Cities, & Chicago Community Areas in which Schools are Located					
Group / Variable	n	Mean Population	Range of % Youth Under 17 Living Below Poverty	Range of % Adults with HS Diploma	Range of % Adults with College Degree
Rural	8	4982	5-31%	67-92%	1-26%
Suburban	8	28,927	1-15%	74-97%	10-74%
Urban	5	72,299	28-44%	47-71%	6-67%

[*] Based on 2007-2008 ISBE School Report Card data and 2000 Census data for villages, cities, and Chicago community areas in which the schools are located.

[**] Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a state-derived academic achievement standard for reading and mathematics that all students and subpopulations must meet in order for a school to avoid sanctions. For 2007, the state threshold was that 55% of students and subpopulations must meet Illinois standards for math and reading.

As can be seen in the table above, most of the sites participating in the evaluation were based in elementary and middle schools. Compared to the high schools, the elementary / middle schools had smaller enrollments, on average slightly more low income students, and were much more likely to attain AYP compared to high schools. Race / ethnicity of students did not substantially differ between the elementary/middle and high school groups.

In terms of community characteristics, the sample of SEL sites was fairly evenly divided between rural, suburban, and urban communities. The urban communities in our sample had the highest levels of poverty and the lowest levels of adults in the community who completed high school. The suburban communities tended to have the lowest levels of poverty and the highest levels of education among adults in the community.

In addition to an overview of the schools and communities in which the SEL Teams in our sample are embedded, it is also important to consider the characteristics of those individuals who completed the survey. In all, 164 surveys were completed as part of the investigation. Of these surveys, 132 were Team Member Surveys and 32 were Administrator Surveys. Of 32 Administrator Surveys, 2 respondents indicated that they were not a member of the school's SEL Team. Because most of the survey items focused on experiences and opinions of SEL, the 2 surveys from administrators who were not on the SEL Team were not included in the subsequent analyses. Thus, our overall sample of administrators is 30. Nearly half of these were building principals (n=13, 43%), 7 (23%) were assistant principals, and 5 (17%) were district level administrators. The largest proportion of survey respondents (62%) was classroom teachers and other school staff.

Table 2. About the Survey Respondents

GROUP	% of Survey Respondents (n=162)	# of Sites with any representation from this group[*] (n=21)
Classroom teachers	31%	19
Other school staff	31%	21
Parents	13%	15
Principals / building administrators	12%	17
Community representatives	4%	6
District administrators	3%	5
Other	6%	2

[*] These numbers are based on survey respondents, and do not necessarily reflect actual composition of any particular site's SEL Team.

SEL Team members, particularly those who are school staff, tend to have vast experience in the education field and/or at the targeted SEL school. School staff completing the survey have on average 13.3 years experience in the education field and have been at their current school for an average of 7.9 years. Among school staff on the SEL Teams, 26% have been in the education field for 20 years or more, and 17% have been at their current school for 15 years or more. On average, administrators have been in their current role for 5.3 years and in their current district for 4.9 years. Five administrators (17%) have been in their current role for 10 years or more; 4 (13%) have been in their current district for 10 years or more.

Among the parents surveyed, 13 (62%) have one child attending the school; 8 (38%) have two or more children attending the school. Just over half the parents (52%) have had children at the school for 2 to 6 years. The remaining parents (48%) have had a child or children at the school for 7 or more years.

Based on these numbers, it would appear that members of SEL Teams are highly knowledgeable of and experienced in their schools. These are individuals with much expertise to contribute to SEL planning and implementation efforts.

Programming Prior to the SEL Grant

To more fully understand the schools in which the SEL Teams were operating, a portion of the focus group discussion was devoted to programming at the school prior to the introduction of the SEL grant. For several reasons, it seems important to understand these prior and/or co-existing efforts. Prior efforts may prime schools for doing this kind of work by laying a groundwork or foundation for future efforts. In addition, prior efforts may help because structural components necessary for implementation may already be in place, helping to further the SEL planning process. For example, a team may already exist, mechanisms for collecting data may already be in place (or data may have already been collected), teacher buy-in may already be high. Alternatively, the existence of programming efforts similar to SEL may hinder the SEL planning and implementation process. For example, school staff may view SEL as simply another grant in a long line of grants, another set of reporting requirements, and may complain of overlapping efforts and competing requirements. For these reasons, a discussion of other programming efforts was included in the focus group protocol.

According to SEL Team members, a wide range of types of programming were being conducted at schools prior to receiving the SEL grant. Type of programming seems to be influenced, at least in part,

by grade levels served at the school. The following table lists programs mentioned by the SEL Teams that we visited.

Table 3. Catalogue of Programming Prior to the SEL Grant

Elementary Schools
PBIS
Conscious Discipline (to raise awareness of effects of behavior on others)
Wise Words (to be reinforced in the classroom)
Daily character pledge
Mental health support grant
Problem Solving Team (a student assistance process)
Ought to be Good (an early childhood program focusing on manners)
Project Wisdom (character building; resisting peer pressure)
"Cool Tools" to teach positive behaviors
Ruby Payne training (impact of poverty on social and emotional outcomes)
Caring School Community (to strengthen student connectedness to school)
Middle Schools
PBIS
Student Assistance Program
High Schools
Professional Learning Community for faculty
Freshmen Mentoring Program
Student Assistance Program
Student Development Program (advisory program)
Student Support Groups
Developmental guidance units (classroom trainings presented by the school's guidance counselors)
Service learning graduation requirement
Community Service Clubs
Classroom-sponsored community service projects
Building recognition of other cultures into the curriculum
Big Brothers / Big Sisters
TALK – Teens Active in the Language of Kindness (leadership development)
SMILE – support group for pregnant and parenting teens
Reality Store (decision-making)
Violence prevention programming
Health Classes
Prevention-focused assemblies

As can be seen in the table above, prior to being awarded the SEL grant, the schools we visited were engaged in numerous programming efforts related to SEL. Thus, rarely if ever did we hear "this is all new to us." When asked about SEL-type programming being done prior to the receipt of the grant, team members' immediate reaction was often *"we've been doing this type of work for years."* Yet, while the philosophy of SEL approaches was often not new to the sites, the existence of state standards seemed to be new knowledge for almost all schools and SEL Team members.

> *"We do a lot of SEL anyway."*

Interestingly, the fact that schools often had SEL-focused programming already in place might be viewed as both a facilitator as well as a barrier to successful planning and implementation. In some cases, prior experience worked as a barrier because the team may believe they are already doing what needs to be done, and they become less open to new SEL learning opportunities. Specifically, having similar programming efforts already in place it may decrease their openness to new ideas and full engagement in the learning process.

There are other times, however, when the initial reaction of *"we already know about SEL"* and *"we're already doing this type of work"* can work in the sites' favor. We often observed sites using this belief as a school-wide strategy for helping to ensure teacher buy-in. That is, rather than presenting the SEL grant as a new set of ideas with new programming elements to be put into place, thereby increasing the burden on teachers, a number of teams presented SEL to their school communities as *"something we're already doing"* and viewed the grant as providing additional resources for doing the work they are already doing. It seems clear how this approach might reduce the resistance from teachers.

Decision to Apply for the SEL Grant

In the focus group discussions, SEL Team members were asked to describe how the school first learned about the grant and what the school hoped to accomplish by securing the SEL grant. From this discussion, we heard that teams first learned about the SEL implementation grant in a variety of different ways. Sometimes, it appeared that schools learned about the grant by mere luck. There were also occasions when the school did not learn about the grant until after it had been awarded to the district.

The reasons behind the decision to apply for the SEL Implementation Grant also varied across schools and districts. Sites described a wide range of reasons for initially applying for the SEL grant. Reasons included wanting to be able to successfully address the new state SEL standards; the desire to create a more supportive school environment; the need to respond to community-wide sentiment that the school should address alcohol and drug use among high school students; seeing the grant as a source of funding to sustain already existing efforts; in response to intense community need based on dramatic social and economic changes; to address issues related to family dysfunction; to address classroom management and discipline-related issues; to improve student skills in a variety of areas; and to address the goals of their school's School Improvement Plan.

In addition to the focus group discussions, both the Administrator and Team Member Surveys included an open-ended question in which respondents were asked to describe the greatest SEL-related issues facing students at their schools. These open-ended survey responses are summarized in the following table.

Table 4. What do you perceive as the greatest SEL issues of students at your school?: A Summary of Responses from Administrators and Team Members

SEL Issues	% of total responses	# of different sites noting issue (n=21)
Administrators (n=28)		
Family issues	50%	12
Peer pressure	46%	8
Lack of interpersonal skills among youth	31%	7
Team Members (n=117)		
Family issues	62%	21
Poverty	43%	17
Peer pressure	32%	18
Community (violence & other issues)	15%	6
Lack of interpersonal skills	14%	11
Bullying	9%	7

There was agreement among team members and administrators that family concerns and peer pressure were key issues faced by the students. Many administrators also noted the lack of interpersonal skills among students, while team members noted poverty and community-level violence as key issues.

Do the reasons for applying for the SEL grant have any relationship to implementation success? The answer to this question is beyond the scope of the current project; however, the question is worth further exploration. Whatever their reasons or mechanisms for applying for the SEL Implementation Grant, team members see the grant as providing a good foundation, a common goal, and a common language for discussing the critical issues facing students at their school.

About the Grant Application Process

During the focus group discussions, we explored both the initial level of SEL grant proposals (that is, district versus school level) as well as the manner in which the grant application was prepared. We learned that some proposals were submitted by the district, while others were written for a specific school. In most cases, when the grant was written for the entire school district, teams reported that splitting dollars across multiple schools made it difficult to be effective because the funding was spread too thin. In addition, at these sites with district level SEL grants, while they may have started out with district level SEL teams, most ultimately ended up with only school level teams. The elimination of district level teams occurred due to time constraints of team members and/or to perceptions that schools were at different levels of development or were choosing to take very different paths in SEL implementation. Other SEL Teams ultimately decided to focus on a limited range of grade levels.

Participation in the grant application process also varied across sites. In some cases, a group of individuals at the school or at the district decided to apply for the grant; in other cases, the grant application was completed by a single individual. Is one approach better than the other? Are there implications for ultimate implementation success based on who was involved in writing the grant? Typically, collaborative approaches to grant writing are encouraged, though it seems few SEL grants were written in a fully collaborative fashion. That is, most often a single individual wrote the grant, often at the district level as opposed to the school level. However, because the SEL grant is a planning-focused grant and because school teams developed the actual implementation plan, there appeared to

be few negative consequences associated with district level grant preparation. This is the view, at least, from the perspective of team members who participated in the focus groups.

An alternative view was expressed by some of the coaches that were interviewed as part of this investigation. One coach said that funding a district rather than funding a school *"has been a sticky situation."* Some districts proposed strategies the grant was never intended to fund; however, funding was awarded and the school's SEL Team was then required to change the initial plan. Had the school been involved from the start, such confusion may have been avoided.

Among those team members who were involved in the grant writing process, responding to the state's RFP and preparing a grant application seemed for most to be a fairly straightforward process. Unfortunately, the ease with which the grant was written, combined with the small amount of funding, may have given some teams an unrealistic expectation of the work which would be necessary down the road once they were awarded the funding. Indeed, one of the suggestions offered by team members as well as coaches was to clarify all requirements of the grant in the RFP, including expected amounts of time necessary to complete each requirement.

Finally, several SEL team members as well as coaches noted that the timelines for various grant requirements often seemed at odds with the typical school calendar.

Grant-Sponsored Trainings & Workshops / Thoughts About CASEL

"We can't say enough about the people at CASEL, the tools, the trainings, we can call them anytime, we have great relationships with them."

"They've held our hand every step of the way…"

The majority of team members gave very positive reviews of the resource materials and tool kit developed by CASEL. In addition, most team members seemed to agree that the trainings provided a good foundation for SEL principles and concepts. Trainers practiced and modeled SEL principles during the trainings, a hallmark of a good training, and many of the training participants picked up on this.

At the same time, however, numerous sites offered advice on ways in which the SEL trainings might be improved. First, it was suggested that different training "tracks" be offered rather than providing the same content to all teams. For example, different levels of training might be offered to teams at different developmental stages. Trainings for different types of schools (primary/elementary, middle level, high school level) might also be provided. Second, many team members mentioned that they would like more opportunities to learn from and network with other school teams. While it is recognized that the trainings already provide such opportunities, sites really like this component and would like to see even more of it. Finally, several of the teams noted that the initial SEL training should be offered on multiple occasions throughout the year so that as new SEL Team members come on board, they can also participate in this training, which was viewed by almost all participants as extremely beneficial. Relatedly, each training should be offered at alternative times and in multiple locations so that all parties (school staff, parents) are better able to attend. One of the sites noted that opening up SEL trainings to school staff not on the SEL Teams would be helpful. Finally, several teams indicated that school administrators should be required to attend the trainings.

> *"They talked a lot about theory, but at some point, I want to know what to do with that theory…"*
>
> *"They are not school oriented … They seemed to have no clue about the problems that schools faced, they were very rigid."*

Too often, abstract thinking is viewed as a luxury rather than an essential component of comprehensive understanding. Thus, it is no surprise that some SEL Team members at a few sites said that there too much "fluff" involved in the trainings and that they wanted to know more practical implementation information. Many expressed frustration because they wanted someone to simply *"tell them what to do."* Only one of the sites that we visited had a strong negative reaction to the training, the primary complaint being that trainers did not understand the school environment.

In addition to what we learned about CASEL and the trainings and workshops during the focus group discussions, the Team Member Survey also addressed perceptions of the training provided through the grant. Specifically, the Team Member Survey asked respondents to describe the most helpful training they had received as well as what additional training topics would be helpful to their teams. These open-ended responses were coded and are summarized in the table below.

Table 5. Team Member Reports of Most Helpful Training and Needs for Additional Training

Type of Training	% of total responses	# of different sites
What types of training & professional development did you find most helpful? (n=105 responses)		
2-day training	46%	19
Program-specific training	20%	7
Follow-up training	10%	9
Local site training	8%	7
Parent workshop	7%	7
Training from coach	6%	3
What additional training topics would be helpful to you? (n=91 responses)		
Parent involvement	24%	14
Curriculum-specific training	21%	12
Teacher buy-in	15%	8
Integrating SEL	13%	8
Community buy-in	10%	8
Youth skill development	8%	4
Grade level specific SEL programming	5%	5

As can be seen in the table above, the largest proportion of respondents (46%) listed the initial 2-day SEL training as being the most helpful. A substantial proportion of respondents (20%) also described program or curriculum specific training as having been the most helpful to their teams. When asked about additional training that may benefit their SEL Teams, team members most often described training focused on increasing parental involvement and curriculum-specific training.

SEL Teams

> *"I am part of a very strong and committed team."*
>
> *"Each of us has really different strengths."*
>
> *"I look forward to the meetings each month…"*

The SEL Teams at each school play a key role in the success of SEL planning and implementation. The team structure required by the grant was seen as a resource by most SEL Team members. In this section of the report, we describe the ways in which SEL Team members were recruited, the composition of SEL Teams, and the structure and functioning of the teams that we visited.

The ways in which SEL Team members were identified or recruited varied a great deal from one site to the next. Strategies included recruiting with an eye toward fulfilling grant requirements, recruiting for specific skills members could bring to the table, recruiting all staff in a particular department (for example, all guidance counselors), recruiting to get representation from all areas / grade levels / departments of the school building, allowing members to self-identify based on their interests in SEL, using a pre-existing team to serve as the SEL Team, and getting representation from teams focusing on other school initiatives (PBIS for example).

The RFP required certain groups to be represented on the SEL Team, and the teams we visited seemed to, for the most part, reflect these requirements. Specifically, the grant requires that SEL Teams include, at a minimum, a principal, a teacher, and a parent. At some sites, an assistant principal served on the SEL Team rather than the school's principal. All teams included school staff representation, though one did not have a classroom teacher.

It was not always apparent that SEL Team members had a full understanding of why they were asked to join the SEL Team. Representation from various groups was a requirement of the grant, but the potential roles to be played by various groups were not described in the RFP. So, for example, what role might a parent play in the planning and implementation of SEL? Describing these roles can help existing team members to be more effective and can also help in the recruitment of new team members. Later in this section of the report, potential roles of SEL Team members will be further described.

Teams varied in size from 3 to 11 members, with most teams having 5 or 6 team members. At 10 of the sites we visited, the school principal or assistant principal serves as the team leader, and at one of the sites, the district superintendent serves as team leader. School counselors, social workers, or school psychologists serve as SEL Team leader at five of the sites.

A number of sites are struggling with how to get parents involved. While a majority of SEL Teams included a parent representative, most often these parents are not "typical" parents. That is, they are often employed at the school or have other roles at the school in addition to the role of "parent" – that is, they are a paid employee of the school, an active PTA member, a retired teacher, and so on. The grant requirements specifically state that the parent representative should be "a community member who does not already have a paid position in the school district." Further exploration of how to access and involve the more "typical" parents clearly seems warranted, and many of the sites visited indicated that increased parental involvement is an issue the SEL Team will continue to address.

Differences in team composition across different types of school settings were observed and may play a role in implementation success. In some high school settings, for example, SEL Teams were made up of a heterogeneous group of school staff, parents, and other community members. At other high schools, the SEL Teams were more homogeneous. Specifically, most of the SEL Teams in high school settings that we visited tended to be guidance-focused. When the team is heterogeneous, given the larger size of high schools, team members may not know each other well and the team, overall, may lack cohesiveness. Homogeneous groups in high school settings, on the other hand, seemed more likely to have already established close working relationships which allowed them to engage in the planning process more effectively. Because only a single example of heterogeneity in a high school SEL Team was observed, this preliminary observation requires further investigation. If heterogeneity in SEL Teams, particularly teams in high school settings, is found to exist at other SEL sites not part of this study, then this may be an area which could be effectively addressed by coaches – that is, ways to inspire team identity and cohesiveness in heterogeneous teams.

Having described membership, recruitment, and composition of SEL Teams, we will now turn to a discussion of the structure and functioning of the SEL Teams that we visited. While the ways in which the SEL Teams operate varies from site to site, the team structure put into place as a result of the SEL Planning and Implementation Grant is itself viewed as a resource by most, if not all, of the SEL Teams we visited. Team members view each other as a valuable resource and recognize the strengths each member brings to the table.

Table 6. Characteristics of Team Membership

Characteristic	Range	Mean
How long have you been a member of the SEL Team (n=128)	1 month – 8 years	1.3 years
How many times has this SEL Team met over the past year? (n=115)	1 to 40 meetings	11.5 meetings
How many meetings have you attended as part of the SEL Team?[*] (n=128)	0 to 50 meetings	12.1 meetings

[*] While the intent of this item was to focus on attendance at SEL Team meetings, it appears that respondents interpreted this item to refer to all SEL-related meetings – not just team meetings.

Nearly all SEL Teams meet regularly, at least once per month. Teams used multiple methods to schedule team meetings, each with its own set of benefits and challenges. Some choose to have SEL Team meetings during the school day, which often requires that substitute teachers be hired to cover for classroom teachers attending the meeting. Other teams meet over lunch, and view the sharing of a meal as an essential component of group bonding. Finally, other groups meet after school because they believe the school day is simply too full already to add yet another group meeting. In addition, these teams do not want to incur the additional costs of hiring substitutes. However, the after school hours are often not an option for stay-at-home parents or for teachers who have young children they must pick up. Because there is no "perfect" meeting time, members often miss meetings, which fragments the team process. Consequently, decision making is not always done by the whole group, and decisions are not always communicated, causing surprise and at times frustration among members of the team. During the school day and after school hours are both seen as presenting challenges for the parents involved on SEL Teams, and this presents an ongoing issue with which teams must struggle.

> *"It seems like we have these great ideas and then a month would go by and we come back and we say 'last month we had this great idea', you know, and nothing ever really happened."*
>
> *"What is frustrating is that we talk about it and think it is figured out. We walk away and then nothing happens. Time is of the essence, so we sometimes go off and do things without communicating with the whole group."*

As noted above, in a few cases, team members expressed frustration with the pace of work completed by the SEL Team. Team members described coming to monthly meetings, and feeling as if tasks that were discussed at the previous month's meeting had not yet been accomplished or completed. Though these experiences happen frequently in group work, it does point to the importance of having an SEL Team leader at each of the schools who has strong leadership skills. Other ways to promote more effective group process include having a regularly scheduled meeting time, identifying a secretary to take minutes with tasks identified and whom each task has been assigned to; preparing and distributing agendas in advance of each meeting; and taking care to follow up on assignments at the next meeting. In many cases, these types of procedures were not employed.

Explicit delineation of a school wide communication system is another important strategy for ensuring effective SEL planning and implementation. An excellent system for school-wide dissemination of information related to SEL has been developed at one of the schools. Representatives have been identified at each grade level, and a member of the SEL team has been identified to communicate what happens in the meetings to school staff through these grade level representatives. This SEL Team member meets with team representatives about once per month to discuss what worked and what did not work, and to teach them about the next section of lessons. The grade level representatives then share the information with the entire staff of that grade level. It is the representative's responsibility to make sure that all grade level staff know how to implement each of the SEL lessons, but more importantly, this system of school wide dissemination also serves to keep the entire school community involved in the SEL process. Furthermore, this is a two-way communication strategy: staff are kept informed of SEL planning and implementation efforts, but also the SEL Team is kept informed of any problems or challenges that are met along the way. In addition to communicating with grade level representatives, at all staff meetings, a member of the SEL team provides updates on what the team has been doing.

In terms of SEL Team functioning, we observed a range, from those teams that were minimally fulfilling the grant requirements, to those that were beginning to gain ownership of the SEL process, to those sites that exhibited excitement for the SEL project and its future and had a strong belief in SEL's potential. Where team cohesion and project identity were high, we observed the higher levels of SEL Team functioning.

As noted earlier in this section of the report, role clarity among team members is of key importance. Collaborative teams function more effectively when team members are assigned clearly defined roles. At many of the sites we visited, however, there was no formal role structure beyond team leader. Typically, formalized roles were not assigned. But at the sites that did assign roles to SEL Team members, some of the roles assigned included the following:

- team leader
- secretary

- liaison to teachers or groups of teachers within the school (for example, teachers at a particular grade level or para education specialists)
- public relations – creating awareness of and excitement for SEL within the school, the district, and/or the broader community
- coordinator of specific program components that fall under SEL
- climate expert – a team member whose primary role is to focus on SEL impacts on the overall school climate
- new teacher guidance – to ensure that as new teachers and staff enter the school, they are provided resources and opportunities to learn about SEL

While there was always an identified team leader, the formality of role structure within SEL Teams varied from site to site. At one end of the continuum were teams with a leader but no other members of the team had roles assigned to them. One of the sites that we visited fell into this category, and the team leader at this site clearly felt overwhelmed by the demands of the grant. At the opposite end of the continuum were teams in which there was not only a team leader, but also a set of highly defined roles with specific responsibilities being assigned to each role and with each role clearly linked to the overall goals of their school's SEL project. Articulating the range of roles to be played on an SEL Team and how each of these roles contributes to SEL planning and implementation may help sites to more effectively recruit team members, maintain team excitement for the project, and ultimately improve implementation and outcomes.

A final issue raised during focus group discussions and related to SEL Team functioning is that of turnover among team members. Team leaders at some of the sites visited described challenges related to ensuring that all new members received the necessary training and support. Team members at one of the sites suggested that the statewide trainings should be offered on a rotating basis throughout the year so that as new team members came on board, they could attend the SEL trainings as well.

About the SEL Coach

In this section of the report, we describe the role played by the SEL coach in working with the teams to plan and implement SEL. To help understand this component of the SEL statewide system, we have several sources of data: comments made by SEL Team members during the focus group discussions, Team Member and Administrator Surveys, and interviews conducted with the coaches themselves.

A wide range in the quality of relationship with and perceived value of the SEL coach was reported. At one end of the continuum are SEL Team members who contend *"her experience and knowledge has been our guiding force"* and *"the coaching is the greatest thing the Partnership has provided."* These teams have regularly scheduled meetings with their coach, and the coach is viewed as a valuable member of the team. At the other end of the continuum are SEL Team members asking the CPRD research team member *"are you our coach?"* or teams reporting that they never see their coach. Even teams that meet with their coach on a regular basis sometimes describe having a *"bad fit"* with their assigned coach.

> *"The most beneficial piece would be the time we get to meet with our coach."*
>
> *"She has a wealth of information."*
>
> *"She is very supportive, keeps us focused on what we need to do."*
>
> *"She is good at giving you the feeling of ownership. She gives info, but you make decisions on what you are going to do with it."*

Coaches play a variety of roles at their assigned schools: helping the team to meet grant requirements, providing teacher training, helping the team to secure administrative support, assisting with outreach in the community, and advocating for schools with the state funders. The roles played by coaches vary from site to site, and most coaches report that their role depends entirely on the needs of the site.

At one of the schools visited, the coach is highly involved in the team, has an office at the school, and serves as SEL coach to all participating schools in the district. The coach provides resources to team members, models SEL skills, teaches lessons in the classroom, and trains staff. Team members see their coach's district-wide role as being a key element of their success because the coach is familiar with what other schools in the district are doing, and thus, each team can learn from the work of other teams in the district.

Just as role clarity is important for SEL Team members, it is also important for coaches. Coaches themselves need a clear understanding of their role, but by the same token, it is also important that the SEL Teams understand what role the coach plays or can play in their SEL efforts. The level of role clarity of the SEL coach can help to define the expectations the team members have for their coach. During an interview, one of the coaches provided an example of the importance of role clarity. She described initially having trouble building a positive relationship with one of her SEL sites. After much thought, she realized the team had a *"misperception of my role as coach which I didn't anticipate…then it finally hit me, this is why you don't want to meet with me."* Specifically, she realized that the team viewed her role as evaluative. Once she told them that her role is *"not to check up on you,"* a more positive working relationship began to be established.

A challenge described by another coach is the "push-pull" between empowering the teams as SEL experts and leaders who must make their own decisions versus being fully supportive of their efforts by advising them on the best path to take. This coach attempts to achieve this balance by carefully articulating the roles of the district coordinator, the coach, and the team.

We asked team members as well as coaches themselves about the qualities needed to be a good SEL coach. There appear to be three primary areas of knowledge / skill that coaches must possess: 1) knowledge of school systems, including how schools work and how schools change; 2) knowledge of SEL – that is, content expertise; and 3) consultation skills – how to lead a group through a process of change. Based on these three areas, specific qualities of good coaches noted by team members include the following: is accessible; is supportive; promotes team ownership; maintains regularly scheduled meetings with the team; has expertise / knowledge of SEL; keeps the team focused; is well connected (to resources, can get answers to questions); has experience in the education field; and understands both the school and the community.

Coaches seem to agree with SEL Team members on what makes a coach effective. Qualities, characteristics, and skill sets which make a coach effective, according to coaches, include the following:

- Having an understanding of how the school operates and the authority of the SEL Team within the school
- Modeling and embodying strong SEL competencies
- Communication skills
- Relationship skills
- Organization skills
- Good knowledge of resources & ability to access resources
- Knowledge of emotional / mental health issues
- Strong facilitation skills and understanding of process (active listening, questioning & exploring assumptions, summarizing, interpreting, synthesizing, & being reflective)
- Allowing the team to make the decisions
- Perseverance
- Confidence
- Empathy
- Creativity
- Integrity: being dependable, on time, following through on tasks, admitting when you don't know the answer
- Celebrating accomplishments

Members of the coaching cadre come to the coaching role with a variety of experiences. According to the coaches interviewed, many have already established working relationships with the schools to which they are assigned, which is seen as a major benefit. As noted above, knowledge of school systems in general as well as systems in place within a particular school building is of great benefit to coaches and the teams they work with.

"I would really like our coach to get to know our school better…"

Coaches need to understand the particular constellation of authority within a particular setting at the district and building level. Further, coaches must know how to use this information to the advantage of the planning and implementation process. It is also important that coaches convey an appreciation of each school's uniqueness.

A complaint among some SEL Team members, particularly in rural communities, is that their coach does not know or understand the school and / or the community in which the school is located. Coaches that were interviewed seem to recognize the importance of understanding the school ecology. One of the coaches interviewed pointed out that a coach *"must understand the dynamics of the district,"* which encompasses the style, the politics, the approaches that will be most effective, the recent changes in district level staff, and the district's understanding of and value placed on SEL.

The ability to work in different ways, with different groups, depending on the team culture, the school culture, and the community culture is itself an important skill for SEL coaches to possess. *"My role as a coach varies from school to school,"* reported one of the coaches because each school has its own culture and its own way of doing things. In addition, each SEL Team is unique. There are many roles

that a coach may play in working with SEL Teams, and the right role depends on the stage that the team is in.

But there are alternatives to working with each SEL Team in a unique way, depending upon the realities of the district, the school, and the team. Working with so many teams, out of necessity, one of the coaches interviewed focuses primarily on efficiency. Her approach is one of *"trying to keep them all on the same page."* While most of the coaches interviewed describe having to work with different teams in very different ways, because she works with so many teams and has limited amounts of time to share with each of them, this coach works with them all in the same way. For this coach and her SEL Teams, the approach seems to be working quite well.

Both the Administrator Survey and the Team Member Survey included questions about the frequency of contact with the SEL Coach. In addition, the Team Member Survey also included a series of questions about the perceived quality of coaching. Responses to these survey items are summarized in the tables below.

Table 7. Frequency of Contact with SEL Coaches

Indicator of Frequency	Administrator Report (n=30)	Team Member Report (n=132)
How often have you had contact with the coach?	57% say "frequently" 17% say "rarely" or "never"	38% say "frequently" 21% say "rarely" or "never"
How many times has the team met with the coach?	5.4 times on average 1-13 times is the range	5.7 times on average[*] 0-30 times is the range

[*] It is important to note that at most sites (n=14), there was an enormous amount of discrepancy across team member reports of number of times the team has met with the coach.

The data presented in the table above suggest that there is a wide range across sites in the frequency of contact with the SEL Coach. During the initial planning year, on average SEL Teams met with their coach 5.7 times. The largest proportion of team members and school administrators say that overall, they have had "frequent" contact with the coach – this contact would include not only face-to-face meetings, but also telephone and e-mail contact. A fairly large portion of survey respondents, however, both administrators and team members, indicate that they "rarely" or "never" have contact with the SEL Coach.

The relationship between frequency of contact with the SEL Coach and successful SEL planning and implementation efforts is the key issue. A full exploration of this relationship is beyond the scope of the current study; however, basic correlational relationships between frequency of contact with the coach and various indicators of successful SEL planning and implementation provide a glimpse into these relationships and are presented in the table below.

Table 8. Correlational Relationships Between Contact with SEL Coach and SEL Planning & Implementation (n=100)

Indicator of SEL Planning & Implementation	Over the past year, …	
	how often have you had contact with the SEL Coach?	how many times has your school's SEL Team met with the Coach?
School –Wide Support for SEL	.159*	.134
Effective SEL Planning	.332**	.244**
Satisfaction with Coach	.456**	.290**
Rubric Ratings: principal commits to SEL	-.186*	-.067
Rubric Ratings: principal engages key stakeholders	-.142	-.256**
Rubric Ratings: principal commits resources for ongoing professional development	.135	.033

*p<.05   **p<.01

Based on the findings presented in the table above, we see that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between frequency of contact with the coach and overall satisfaction with the coach. That is, the more often the team or team members have contact with the coach, the more satisfied they are with the services provided by the coach. Statistically significant correlations were also found to exist between frequency of contact with the coach and indicators of school-wide support for SEL and effective SEL planning. These correlations suggest that more frequent contact with the SEL Coach is associated with higher levels of school-wide support for SEL and more effective SEL planning among SEL Team members.

Also presented in the table above are correlations between frequency of contact with the SEL Coach and rubric ratings of the school principal's support of SEL. While most of these correlations are not significant, two statistically significant correlations were found. Specifically, there is a significant negative correlation between member contact with the coach and rubric ratings of the principal's level of commitment to SEL: more contact with the coach is associated with lower levels of principal commitment to SEL. Similarly, there is a significant negative correlation between number of times the coach met with the team and rubric ratings of the extent to which the principal engages key stakeholders: again, more contact with the coach is associated with less principal engagement with key stakeholders. These correlations may reflect the need for coaches to meet more frequently with certain SEL Teams or team members when the school's principal is not fully supportive of the SEL process.

Overall, these correlational findings suggest that the frequency of contact with the SEL Coach matters, but clearly, further investigation is needed. Next, we consider the perceived quality of coaching. The Team Member Survey included a series of 4 items in which respondents are asked to rate the performance of their SEL coaches in a variety of areas. An overview of responses from the Team Member Surveys is provided in the table below.

Table 9. Perceived Quality of Coaching[*]

Item	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
How well did the coach assist your team in understanding the importance of SEL?	11%	16%	29%	44%
How would you rate your coach's understanding of the SEL needs of a school like yours?	14%	14%	28%	44%
How would you rate access to or amount of time that your school received from your coach?	11%	20%	40%	29%
Overall, how would you rate the quality of training / support / information provided by your SEL coach?	16%	15%	28%	40%

[*] Based on n=132 Team Member Surveys

As can be seen in the table above, for each of the 4 areas, the clear majority of survey respondents rated the coach as having done a "good" or "excellent" job. However, a number of survey respondents rated the coach as having done a "poor" job in one or more of the areas assessed. Based on the 4 indicators available on the survey, if we define low satisfaction with coach as below a "good" average rating on two or more of the four quality dimensions assessed, then six of the 21 SEL Teams we visited (28%) report low satisfaction with their SEL coach.

The relationships between overall coach satisfaction and various indicators of SEL planning and implementation were also explored. Overall coach satisfaction is the average rating across the 4 indicators listed above. Correlations between overall coach satisfaction and school-wide support of SEL, effective SEL planning, and principal support of SEL are presented in the following table.

Table 10. Correlations Between Coach Satisfaction and SEL Planning & Implementation (n=100)

Indicator of SEL Planning & Implementation	Correlation with Coach Satisfaction
Team Member reports of School Support for SEL	.222[**]
Team Member reports of Effective SEL Planning	.344[**]
Rubric Ratings: principal commits to SEL	-.151
Rubric Ratings: principal engages key stakeholders	-.103
Rubric Ratings: principal commits resources for ongoing professional development	.324[**]

[*] $p < .05$ [**] $p < .01$

The statistically significant correlations presented in the table above suggest that the more satisfied team members are with the SEL Coach, the more likely the school principal is to commit resources to support SEL, the higher the level of school-wide support for SEL (among teachers and other school staff), and the more effective the SEL planning process.

In sum, the correlational findings suggest that both the frequency of contact with the SEL Coach as well as the perceived quality of coaching both are related to successful engagement in the SEL planning and implementation process.

During the coach interviews, the support and resources provided to the coaches themselves were also explored. Coaches agreed that the differing backgrounds of coaches make provision of support and learning to coaches somewhat challenging; on the other hand, it also makes for a group that has much to learn from each other. All coaches interviewed agreed that the materials from CASEL were phenomenal. One of the coaches said that initially the quarterly meetings in Springfield provided a lot of teaching and training of coaches. However, as time went on, the meetings began to shift focus, focusing instead on grant requirements and how best to move the statewide SEL initiative forward. In other words, the meetings became more like a grant advisory committee for the state rather than professional development for the coaches, with the state modifying their approach based on the knowledge the coaches had of what was actually going on at the sites. More recently, however, there seems to have been a concerted shift back to providing support for the coaches.

Another coach noted that when coaching plans were initially developed (before any sites had been funded), the assumption was that all funded schools would be at the same level of development. However, the initial year that grants were awarded, applications were accepted from all levels of SEL development / knowledge. While this is a good approach from the statewide perspective, it makes coaching quite difficult because coaches must work with teams at various stages of development, each with varying needs. Consequently, adjustments to initial coaching plans had to be made.

The coaches were asked what the state can do to better support them. Interestingly, responses were quite similar to what we heard from SEL Team members about the trainings. According to one coach, there is much focus on SEL ideology and process. *"Sometimes what people need is the nitty-gritty."* By "nitty-gritty," this coach refers to knowledge of what questions to ask the teams, and to systems for keeping track of all the pieces coaches must keep track of. In addition, several of the coaches interviewed said they would like to have more time for interaction with other coaches, to learn more about issues others are grappling with and ideas for working with their teams most effectively.

As noted above, at the statewide meetings for coaches, a lot of time is spent discussing the grant requirements. Several of the coaches suggested that more time is needed for coaches to share with each other. In addition, a "refresher course" on coaching models was suggested. Finally, it was suggested that a deeper understanding of teachers and the demands placed on them would be beneficial to coaches, perhaps by having a panel of teachers talk to the entire group of coaches.

Finally, the issue of role clarity again emerged in our interviews with the coaches. Clear expectations of coaches (and of teams) would be helpful to both the SEL Coach as well as the SEL Team members they work with. Detailed articulation of the coach's role would help coaches to understand their responsibilities and the steps involved and would help team members to view the role of coach as a provider of support rather than as a monitor and/or evaluator of their efforts.

Administrative Support for SEL

> *"SEL defines our school's philosophy, I hire people who can and will support SEL .. we prioritize for SEL."*
>
> *"If the principal supports something, participates in training, models what is expected for the staff, then it will happen. That is my role – to make SEL live throughout the school by modeling it, expecting it from everyone and celebrating each step along the way."*
>
> *"SEL has been the biggest factor in any success I have had as a school leader. By using SEL as a central core, looking at all we do through an SEL lens, our school has grown academically, socially, emotionally."*

Administrative support of SEL plays a key role in the success of planning and implementation efforts. Implementing high quality programs in schools requires that staff are supported by informed, competent, and committed school administrators. These administrators promote high quality implementation in multiple ways: by providing organizational leadership, by ensuring that staff receive training and professional development, and by identifying and addressing obstacles and barriers to successful implementation. In the current investigation, administrative involvement in and support of SEL was assessed during focus group discussions, on the surveys, and through rubric ratings.

At 10 of the schools we visited, the school principal or assistant principal served as the coordinator of the SEL Team. At most of the remaining sites, school administrators were on the team, but were not the leader of the team. There were only a few cases in which the school's principal was not a member of the SEL Team. In and of itself, this did not appear to be a problem as long as the principal was supportive of SEL efforts in other ways. At some schools, administrators were highly supportive, but not involved in the day-to-day operations of SEL planning and implementation. It appears that teams can function well without direct principal involvement; principal support, however, is of central importance. It also should be noted that at most schools, at least one school administrator (not necessarily the principal) appeared to be a major player on the SEL Team.

Administrators completing the survey were asked to describe their role on the school's SEL Team. These open-ended responses were coded and are summarized in the table below.

Table 11. Administrator Views of Their Role in the Implementation of SEL Standards[*]

Administrator Role	% of total responses	# of different sites
Providing support	45%	11
Leadership	28%	8
Training	21%	4
Allocating resources	17%	3
Participating in the process	17%	5
Modeling	17%	5
Helping establish goals, vision	14%	4
Engaging in planning	7%	2
Prioritizing SEL	7%	2

[*] Based on n=29 responses to an open-ended question on the Administrator Survey.

As mentioned above, there are a number of ways that principals and other school administrators can be involved in SEL planning and implementation beyond serving as a member of the SEL Team. When asked to describe their role in the process, administrators completing the survey most often noted provision of support as their key role. As can be seen in the table above, nearly half of the administrators listed provision of support as their role; nearly a third of the administrators noted provision of leadership as a key element of their role in SEL planning and implementation.

The Administrator Survey also included items designed to assess the amount of time devoted to SEL and the frequency of participation in team meetings and meetings with the SEL coach. According to administrators completing the survey, SEL Teams have met on average 10.9 times over the past year, and the administrators have attended, on average, 8.8 of these team meetings. Over half of the administrators (53%) say they have attended less than 9 team meetings over the past year; 27% have attended between 9 and 12 meetings; and 20% have attended 13 or more SEL Team meetings over the past year. Finally, 54% of administrators say they "frequently" have contact with their school's assigned SEL coach, while 13% indicate they "rarely" have contact with the coach. Based on administrator report, most are highly involved with SEL, attending team meetings on a regular basis and having frequent contact with the team's SEL coach.

In addition to the form and frequency of their involvement, the administrators were also asked to rate their feelings of supportiveness for SEL in their schools. These responses are summarized in the following table.

Table 12. Administrator Support of SEL[*]

SURVEY ITEM	Mean Rating
I am familiar with the vision / goals of SEL at our school.	4.7 (80% strongly agree)
I support the vision / goals and practices of SEL standards at our school.	4.9 (93% strongly agree)
I support the implementation of SEL standards and practices at this school.	4.9 (93% strongly agree)
Students at our school will benefit from implementing the SEL standards.	4.9 (87% strongly agree)
Implementing SEL standards in our school will improve academic achievement.	4.8 (80% strongly agree)
Implementing SEL standards in our school will improve student behavior.	4.8 (83% strongly agree)
Our school has the knowledge, skills, & capacity to implement the SEL standards.	4.2 (30% strongly agree)
Our school will effectively implement SEL programs and practices.	4.2 (30% strongly agree)
As a result of SEL standards implementation, our staff are better prepared to serve students & families.	3.9 (23% strongly agree)

[*] Based on n=30 Administrator Surveys. Mean values can range from 1 to 5: 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree; higher scores indicate more supportiveness.

Based on the findings presented in the table above, it seems the administrators see themselves as highly supportive of SEL in their schools. The administrators also express strong beliefs that the implementation of SEL standards at their schools will benefit students, both in academic and behavioral domains. Finally, though their beliefs are not quite as positive in this area, administrators believe that their schools have the capacity to effectively implement SEL standards.

SEL Team members were also asked for their impressions of administrative support on the Team Member Survey. Respondents were asked to rate the following statement: "There is administrative support for implementing the SEL standards and practices at our school." While administrators themselves rated this item as 4.9 on a 5-point scale (93% of administrators strongly agreed with the statement), team members rated this same item as 4.3, with 51% strongly agreeing with the statement. This suggests that administrators see themselves as more supportive of SEL than team members see them.

Rubric ratings provide another source of data on administrator support of SEL. Three items in the rubric focus on the principal's involvement in SEL (two implementation items and one sustainability item). Each item is rated on a 1 to 4 scale, with 1 indicating "little or no development" in the area being rated and 4 indicating a "fully functional level of development and implementation." We used the ratings completed in Spring 2008, the end of the initial planning year. Of the 21 sites in our study's sample, rubric ratings are available for 19. Ratings for these items are summarized in the following table.

Table 13. Rubric Ratings of Principal Support[*]

Rubric Item	Mean Rating	Range	St. Dev.	# of sites with rating of 3 or 4
Principal commits to SEL The principal has reflected on, understands, and accepts the value of SEL as a framework for school improvement and has committed to the effort. Principal commitment ensures support for SEL at the highest levels and is required to sustain school-wide SEL successfully.	3.6	2 to 4	.614	17
Principal engages key stakeholders The principal has shared information about SEL with key school and community stakeholders (e.g. teachers, families, student support personnel, support staff, community members). The principal has created an SEL Steering Committee, consisting of representatives from all of these groups.	3.1	2 to 4	.718	15
Principal commits resources for ongoing professional development The principal commits resources for ongoing professional development and provides opportunities for reflection and feedback for all school staff. Ongoing professional development and reflection keep SEL instructions and activities fresh and allow for continuous improvement.	2.0	1 to 4	.907	5

[*] Based on n=19 sites with Spring 2008 rubric ratings available.

As can be seen in the table above, the average rating across sites for the principal's commitment to SEL was quite high. Nearly all of the sites (17 out of 19) were rated as fully or mostly functional in this area. Similarly, the principal's success in engaging key stakeholders in the SEL process was also quite high, with an overall mean rating of 3.1. In all, 15 of the 19 sites were rated as fully or mostly functional in this area. A third item from the rubric rating scale which reflects principal support of SEL focuses on the extent to which the principal has committed resources for ongoing professional development in the area of SEL. This area, on average, was not rated as highly as the others, with an overall mean of 2.0 and only 5 sites being given a "mostly" or "fully" functional rating. This lower rating may reflect the fact that the first two items are key components of the initial planning phases of SEL, while the third item focuses more on sustainability and which may not be an essential step during the first year of SEL development.

Given that most sites are still in the initial stages of planning and implementation, the lower ratings of the third item are understandable at this point in the sites' SEL development.

During the focus group discussions, we learned that high levels of administrative support can be reflected in many ways: SEL language appearing in district-wide goals as well as in the school's School Improvement Plans; SEL topics being included on school-wide meeting agendas; the principal being an active member of the SEL team; and the principal attending SEL trainings and other events. At one of the sites visited, in anticipation of SEL, the superintendent secured pay increases for all teachers in the district under the condition that they would assume additional responsibilities related to the implementation of SEL. In this same district, a 1-year sabbatical was given to a teacher which she used to work with CASEL and learn about SEL. This teacher is currently a key member of her school's SEL Team.

A high level of administrative support at one of the sites visited was reflected in a highly developed system of professional development and support related to SEL. New teachers are given SEL training as a standard practice. There is a resource library for SEL in the school's main office, and every teacher in the building has their own library of SEL resources in their classroom. The district provides monthly 2-hour SEL workshops, and the school offers an ongoing series of morning meetings to discuss SEL related programming and issues. Taken together, these professional development and support opportunities help team members to understand what other schools are doing, to assess their own progress, and to identify new strategies they might wish to implement. These opportunities also help to ensure that all teachers, even new ones, have a clear understanding of the SEL philosophy and programming.

There were, however, some exceptions to these high levels of administrative supportiveness. At one of the schools visited, the principal is not a part of the SEL Team and has talked about not reapplying for grant funds. The assistant principal at this school serves as the SEL Team leader and is a true champion of SEL within the school. While the lack of support from this school's principal has certainly slowed down their progress and made much of the work far more difficult than it might otherwise be, this site has illustrated that it is possible to move forward without the principal's full support. At another school, SEL Team members said there is a school-wide perception that SEL is optional. These team members believe that a strong mandate from administration would go far in their efforts to implement SEL.

Overall, however, most teams report that they have building level support from their school's principal; that they have district-level support from the superintendent and the school board; and that when there is turnover in these positions and new individuals come on board, that they tend to be supportive as well.

Still, the issue of transition in school level or district leadership or among SEL Team members is an important one to consider. Schools need to protect SEL at various levels within the school and district. This is particularly salient for schools that are experiencing changes in administration, school boards, or other leadership teams. Transition in administration can be problematic. Administrative support, a key to smooth SEL implementation, is a fragile condition because of the lack of retention of school principals.   In our sample of school administrators who completed the survey, principals had been in their current role of principal for an average of 5.3 years, and they had worked in their current school district for 4.9 years.

"It seems that SEL was put on the back burner."

In some cases, the SEL teams are operating in situations in which SEL is no longer a priority for their district due to a new superintendent and / or new school board membership. These new individuals may come to their positions with new philosophies and new priorities. One of the sites visited described a significant change in membership in the district's school board a few years ago. SEL Team members say that with the current board, *"it seems SEL is not a top priority."* For example, the district no longer requires the 1-hour monthly SEL training for all staff in the district. In addition, the new board recently proposed 14 goals for the district, none with an SEL focus.

Clearly, a key part of the role of administrators should be to protect SEL during the transition to a new principal, to a new superintendent, or to a new school board member. At the sites we visited, a number of strategies for dealing with these transitions were described. Strategies included inviting new superintendents and school board members to participate in SEL activities and events at the school; sharing parent and student data which support the need for SEL; developing an SEL transition plan for school administrators and district leaders; having a script for telling the SEL story to school board members and other district-wide leaders; and cultivating an SEL champion in the school and community.

The SEL Implementation Process: Selecting an Evidence-Based Program

At the schools participating in the Case Study Project, awareness of SEL is high. Nearly all school staff now know about SEL and the statewide SEL standards. SEL Teams have successfully been created, a vision has been articulated, and an action plan has been developed. Selection of an evidence-based program -- Step 6 in the implementation process outlined by CASEL -- is for most of the sites visited either their current point in the process or has just been recently completed. Some of the SEL programs and approaches selected by the teams are listed in the following table.

Table 14. List of Programs and Approaches Selected for SEL Implementation

Specific Programs
Love & Logic
Second Step
School Connect
Caring School Community
Responsive Classroom
Wise Words
Lion's Quest
Cool Tools
School-Wide Approaches
Student advisory system
Student leadership team
Staff development on SEL
Videos
Respect tickets / PBIS
Assemblies
Change in school documents, policies, procedures to reflect SEL

In selecting an evidence-based program, a number of challenges were faced by many of the SEL sites. Many sites experience resistance to the selection of a curriculum. There appeared to be broad-based apprehension around curriculum selection. For some sites, this resistance can in part be attributed to

the process required for getting district level approval. For other sites, the thought of implementing a new curriculum in the school caused sites to ask themselves "what must be given up in order to do this?" In selecting a curriculum, teams must consider how the new curriculum will fit with the grade levels served in the building; how it will fit with the school community overall; does the curriculum match the school's overall philosophy and mission; and the anxiety the new curriculum may cause teachers who must find more time in their day to implement a new program. Adding to these concerns, some sites say they have experienced pressure from the state and from their coach to adopt a curriculum. With all of these considerations, it is not surprising that the selection process would cause apprehension!

Several of the High School Teams reported difficulty in identifying an evidence-based curriculum that fits well in their school setting. Rather than selecting an evidence-based SEL program, more than one high school site set up an advisory system and uses this as a strategy for addressing the SEL standards. Another high school site set up a student leadership team. Some SEL Teams at the elementary school level also chose not to select an SEL curriculum. Instead, these teams attempt to integrate SEL into the everyday curriculum and instructional practices. One such team indicated that their proposal was approved without a curriculum; the team resents that now the state is insisting that the site choose a curriculum. One site decided not to select a curriculum at all but rather to hire a local community counselor to provide staff development on SEL. The SEL Team thought that the approach of increasing staff expertise would be more likely to result in classroom teachers engaging in SEL practices throughout the school and throughout the school day.

> *"We view it as an across the curriculum approach rather than Wednesday at 2:30 we're going to read the story and play with these puppets. The curriculum is not our goal in life."*
>
> *"With some of the SEL stuff, they are giving a toolbox to somebody on the street and saying start working on cars. Then sometimes they give them training on what to do with a monkey wrench or socket. It's not the same as training them to be a mechanic and then giving them a box of tools. First we should train them as mechanics, then give them the tools."*

A major barrier SEL Teams face when selecting an SEL curriculum is resistance from classroom teachers. A great deal of time and energy is devoted to getting teacher buy-in. To introduce SEL programming into the school without overwhelming teachers, team members at one of the sites began by talking about the SEL standards, and one member of the team wrote an article about the standards for the school newsletter. These team members believe it is critically important to introduce any new initiative slowly and carefully. As a result, thus far, they say they have not encountered resistance from staff. In response to a lack of teacher buy-in, other sites have encouraged broad-based teacher participation in the selection of a curriculum.

> *"Helping them understand that you do not lose class time by doing this, but that you gain it through improvements in student attitudes."*
>
> *"I think there is buy in, but it will take a while to see how its going to be implemented. The teachers say 'I understand this is very important, but how am I going to implement it?' But once they realize that this is not going to take up all of their day, they will be very happy to implement it."*
>
> *"I am hoping, really, that the teachers understand that if they incorporate and make this a part of their everyday teaching that it kind of takes the place of a lot of the managing that they had to take and do all day long."*

For some of the SEL Teams who are resisting the selection of a curriculum, the underlying reason for this resistance is more about having a different view of or approach to SEL. These teams tend to focus on SEL as a framework or approach rather than as a specific program.

> *"We are using the SEL framework and language in the school for everything we do."*

The teams that use SEL as a framework say that the model has helped them to strategically organize and implement other initiatives; that the SEL Team serves as an umbrella group that strategically organizes and implements multiple initiatives within the school; that the SEL framework has helped the team to identify the need for improved communication and additional outreach to parents; that new partnerships have been formed and existing ones have been strengthened, which in turn has led to additional resources for the school; and that the SEL framework has helped the school to increase its focus on prevention.

In sum, SEL Teams appear to fall along a continuum ranging from a strict focus on an SEL curriculum to viewing SEL as a framework for all that is done in the school setting. Not surprisingly, those groups with a strong focus on the curriculum tended to focus on the process of finding a curriculum that matches the needs of the school and the challenges associated with doing this. On the other hand, teams that view SEL primarily as a framework tend to focus more on the process itself and describe how a major impact of SEL at their schools has been bringing more intentionality to their efforts. These teams tend to see SEL as an incremental process rather than a checklist of tasks and requirements to be accomplished. Meaningful, lasting change in the school environment is an iterative process. We must continue to encourage all sites to view SEL as an ongoing process of change as depicted in CASEL's model of the implementation and sustainability process.

Within-school communication mechanisms to increase school-wide buy-in and to ensure implementation fidelity is an area which many sites said they plan to focus on in the upcoming year. Getting the word out to parents and to the broader community is also a next step many sites are pursuing. Many teams are struggling with parent involvement. This includes parent's role in the SEL process, parental presence at the school for SEL programming and SEL-sponsored activities, and parental support of SEL principles at home. Parental involvement is yet another area which will be the focus of many SEL Teams in the coming months.

Integrating SEL with PBIS, Mental Health Support Grants, and Other Initiatives

Seamlessly integrating SEL with other initiatives at the school is something that many of the SEL sites we visited are thinking about. The underlying assumption is that such integration will help to ensure the

ongoing sustainability of SEL and other initiatives in their schools. Given the limited resources available (staff, time, funding), it is in the best interest of schools to build such bridges across various project efforts.

> *"At this school, all of our activities are intertwined."*

Integration of initiatives is accomplished in a variety of ways at the SEL sites we visited: having representation from other initiatives on the SEL Team, having the same group of individuals serve on multiple grant teams, having the same project coordinator across initiatives, having the SEL Team actively engage in discussions about integration and what it would look like, and using the requirements of one grant to meet the requirements of other grants. At one of the sites visited, there are four committees, including SEL, that meet together monthly and share similar goals. While combined meetings can save time, the challenge faced in these types of combined meetings is a lack of depth in discussions during the meetings.

The position of SEL in each school's overall framework differs across schools and teams. As noted in the preceding section of this report, a number of the sites noted that SEL provides a common language, an overarching focus, and a cohesiveness to their efforts. Thus, at some schools, SEL is viewed as the universal approach that links all other efforts and that serves the needs of all students and staff. At other schools, however, SEL is viewed as the targeted component of their efforts. At these schools, SEL is used to serve a specific purpose for a specific group of individuals. One of the schools, for example, had selected a curriculum many years ago to address overall school climate. But over the years, many of the teachers realized that their students needed skills development in addition to the overall school climate component. For this school, the SEL grant was seen as a way to supplement what they were already doing in order to address some of the needs for student skills development.

Integrating SEL and PBIS was discussed by a number of teams during the focus groups. Of the 21 schools participating in the SEL Case Study Project, five were implementing both SEL and PBIS.

> *"It takes a relationship in order for children to buy into it (PBIS reward system). If we get a handle on SEL first, PBIS will be easier to implement."*
>
> *"If children have a relationship with you, then PBIS will work more effectively."*

SEL Teams seem to agree that SEL and PBIS can be blended – they are both about learning to make better choices. Interestingly, team members at some sites view SEL as much more broad in its approach, compared to PBIS. In this view, SEL helps to facilitate the PBIS program or any other program a district may choose to implement. Other teams, however, viewed PBIS as their universal approach and SEL as a targeted approach to provide skills training for those students not benefitting from the more universal approach. Because of the clear overlap in goals, the importance of being more explicit in describing how the various pieces fit together and how the various conceptual approaches are similar and/or are unique must be highlighted. A clear understanding of how the pieces fit together and in what ways they are unique would help to improve SEL planning and implementation at multiple levels.

At one of the schools visited which has a Mental Health Support Grant, team members believe the two sources of funding fit together quite nicely, and they have encountered minimal challenge having both grants at the school. The SEL Team views the two grants as part of a pyramid. SEL represents their universal programming efforts, designed to serve all students and focused on motivation and goal

setting, empathy development, conflict-resolution and anger management skills, and dealing with diversity. The mental health grant is designed to serve as early intervention and remediation for those students who are struggling with the SEL competencies.

One SEL Team we visited spoke at length about the challenge of integrating PBIS and SEL. They described feeling that the state funders and CASEL were uncomfortable with the need to integrate SEL with other efforts such as PBIS, so much so that oftentimes, PBIS was not even mentioned when it should have been. Team members at this site suggested training for SEL Team members should be designed to address these challenges head on. In addition, this team suggests that coaches should all be required to understand the requirements of each grant and the potential contributions and unique features of each approach.

To help ensure teacher support and buy-in, the SEL Team at one school that is implementing both SEL and PBIS has tried to present PBIS and SEL as a single initiative so that staff do not feel overwhelmed. While team members agree that the two initiatives have "more in common than different," at times the integration of the two has not been easy. One of the reasons for this challenge has been the differing philosophies of the two initiatives, one of which focuses on external reward systems (PBIS), while the other focuses on intrinsic rewards (SEL). Another part of the challenge is the time requirement, and the school has addressed this by having a single team meeting for both PBIS and SEL. But they have had difficulty finding a balance of what to focus on during the meetings. And when the SEL coach attends the meetings, the focus is often taken away from PBIS. Finally, the team has also been frustrated by the redundancy in some of the grant requirements. Members of the team say they have done a great deal of work through the PBIS initiative (for example, student surveys) and they have been made to feel (by their coach) that they need to re-do the survey and much of the other work they have done to better fit with the SEL approach. In no place was the process of integration easy or comfortable.

Obstacles and Barriers to SEL Implementation

In addition to the challenges associated with integrating various initiatives as described in the preceding section of this report, a number of additional obstacles and barriers were also described on surveys and during focus group discussions with team members and interviews with the coaches. Responses to an open-ended question on the Administrator and Team Member Surveys about obstacles and barriers are summarized in the table below.

Table 15. Perceived Obstacles and Barriers to SEL Implementation

Obstacle / Barrier	% of total responses	# of different sites at which this obstacle was noted
Administrators (n=30 responses)		
Time	40%	11
Staff buy-in	17%	5
Physical characteristics of the school	10%	2
Competing initiatives	10%	3
Communication	10%	3
Team Members (n=112 responses)		
Time	32%	18
Staff buy-in	30%	14
Changes at the district level	7%	3
Communication	6%	6
Implementation	6%	6
Community awareness	4%	4
Parent involvement	4%	4
Lack of student buy-in	4%	3

[*] The survey item was "what have been the major obstacles/barriers for your school in developing & implementing the SEL plan?"

Administrators and team members agree: the biggest challenges being faced in SEL planning and implementation are lack of time and lack of teacher buy-in, and based on focus group discussions, these two challenges are very much interrelated. During the focus groups, every school mentioned at least some resistance among their teachers to SEL implementation. While there may be appreciation among teachers for the concepts SEL promotes, but there is often not full support for SEL implementation practices. According to team members, the low levels of teacher buy-in are the result of limited amounts of time to devote to SEL, discomfort in addressing emotional issues (both their own as well as those of their students), and a general resistance to new ideas and strategies. In addition, as already described in an earlier section of this report, the lack of strong support from the school's principal can also result in a lack of teacher buy-in.

"In the broad terms, the staff is supportive. In actual implementation, I think the staff is a little apprehensive about where it will fit and if it is out of some faculty members comfort zone."

"Anytime we have something new, the question becomes 'what do we leave out?'"

"As a classroom teacher I feel like I have ISAT breathing down my neck, I have to worry a lot about that. SEL is nice, but I'm not graded on SEL."

Some SEL Teams noted issues related to violating teacher contracts. SEL Team members at several high school sites that have developed an SEL advisory system recognize that it requires an enormous commitment of time from the teachers. At one of these sites, the guidance counselors develop all materials to be used in advisory sessions so as to put as little burden as possible on the teachers.

Whether SEL is implemented through an advisory system or through a specific curriculum, it seems that implementing SEL at the high school level presents particular challenges. One team member pointed

out the differences between high school classrooms and classrooms in the lower grades: *"Sometimes it's more difficult for us, for change. Especially since we don't have the kids all day. We have them for fifty minutes and those fifty minutes are very important to us because whenever you're trying to teach trigonometry or advanced level classes, or even just a basic science class, you need your time."*

Another underlying cause of low teacher buy-in, according to some SEL Team members, is the stigma associated with mental health and emotions. It seems many teachers are uncomfortable with how their own emotions affect others and with *"going to an emotional level"* with students. For the advisory programs being developed at the high school level, teachers were reported to be saying things like *"I'm not a counselor; I'm a math teacher… I don't want to deal with that other stuff."* Increasing teacher comfort in dealing with students on an emotional level is clearly an area needing to be addressed within the SEL framework.

> *"They've already been doing a lot of the great things and just now they're calling it SEL."*

Yet another root cause of low teacher buy-in is the belief that SEL is *"nothing new."* A few staff at some of the sites visited believe that they have already been implementing SEL. It seems important, then, that training include some discussion of the ways in which SEL is unique and of the value that is added in adopting the SEL approach.

Overall, most team members, however, expressed the belief that resistance from teachers will decrease over time as the teachers see the effectiveness of SEL first hand. In the meantime, the lack of teacher buy-in is being addressed by SEL Teams across the state in a variety of ways:

- Promoting peer-to-peer dissemination of SEL principles and practices
- Opening lines of school-wide communication to ensure that all teachers are engaged
- Recognizing teachers' heavy work loads and decreasing the burden on teachers
- Fostering principal support
- Recognizing that teachers in many ways do this already but promoting the idea that the school is now moving from haphazard efforts to intentional, focused SEL efforts
- Showing the link between SEL and academic outcomes (ISAT performance)

In addition to limited time and low levels of teacher buy-in, another barrier mentioned by several sites and coaches during focus groups and interviews is the lack of coordination of SEL efforts between the district and the school building. Many situations were described in which someone at the district office wrote the grant on behalf of the school without consulting those who would actually be doing the work. *"Being told what to do doesn't go well,"* said one of the coaches. In addition to the lack of communications and collaboration during the grant writing phase, there is also the issue of grant money. Funding is given to the district, but SEL is implemented at the building level. As a result, said one of the coaches, sometimes key tasks have not been completed because the feeling among team members was that it was something the district should address. Funding the district rather than the building also presents challenges for SEL-related expenditures and reimbursements. Aligning SEL grant line items with central office line items is quite difficult according to several sites. Finally, one of the coaches described her struggle to get the state to send mailings to the team leader and not to the district office, where materials and information are sometimes not passed on to the teams.

Impacts of SEL

While the grantees are still in the early stages of planning and implementation of SEL, a number of impacts are already being reported by the participating sites. Impacts described include changes in teachers and other school staff, changes in students, and changes in the broader school environment or climate. These changes were described in the responses to open-ended questions on the surveys as well as during focus group discussions.

The table below summarizes responses to a question on the Administrator and Team Member Surveys which asks respondents to describe the ways in which the SEL project has impacted the school to date.

Table 16. Perceived SEL Project Impacts[*]

Impacts	% of total responses	# of different sites noting this impact
Administrators (n=28 responses)		
Increased staff awareness	21%	5
Improved student behavior	21%	5
Provided a framework for staff / "common language"	18%	5
Team Members (n=113 responses)		
No positive impact	8%	7
Improved school climate	14%	12
Staff awareness of SEL	14%	10
Having a program in place	12%	11
Improved student skills	12%	7
Improved student behavior	11%	5
Student awareness of SEL	8%	8
Improved student attitude	7%	7
Parent awareness of SEL	6%	5
Engaging in the planning process; having a plan in place	6%	6
Improved classroom practice	6%	5

[*] Based on responses to the question "in what ways has the SEL project impacted your school to this point?"

As can be seen in the table above, the primary responses from school administrators were that the project had increased awareness of SEL among school staff, had yielded some improvements in student behavior, and had provided staff with a framework for addressing a host of school-related issues and concerns. None of the administrators commented that the project had not had any impacts on their schools (though several did not respond to the survey question).

SEL Team members were also asked about the impacts of SEL on their schools. Nine respondents (8%) said that they had seen no positive impacts on their schools that they could attribute to SEL. Among those respondents who reported a positive impact of SEL, the most common responses focused on improved school climate, increased staff awareness of SEL related issues, the team's success in finding a program to implement, and improved SEL-related skills among students.

Focus group discussions offered an opportunity for SEL Team members to describe their group's successes and the early impacts of SEL in their schools in a more detailed and in-depth fashion. First, we

present comments related to impacts on staff, then impacts on students, and finally impacts on the broader school environment.

Impacts on Staff

> *"I don't know how I taught before SEL."*
>
> *"As a teacher, SEL makes your life easier ... you're gonna get more done overall if you don't have those behavior issues."*
>
> *"I've learned how much kids have changed. A second grader today is not the same as a second grader 20 years ago."*
>
> *"SEL makes anything I need to do easier. Since starting, I can't remember yelling at kids."*
>
> *"It has changed the way I teach and plan for each day. It makes my job a job I love to do and want to continue to do."*
>
> *"SEL has been a life changing experience … my whole personality has changed."*

The impacts on school staff that were attributed to SEL fall into three major areas: 1) awareness / knowledge, 2) attitudes, and 3) behavior. Many team members spoke of an increase in staff awareness as a result of SEL efforts in the school – awareness of the needs of the child and how those needs may be different today than they were in the past, awareness of the need for and value of SEL, and awareness of the existence of statewide SEL standards. A number of teachers said that their new knowledge of SEL has provided a framework for their work and created an increased level of "intentionality" to what they do. In addition, through SEL, staff have learned how to more effectively deal with behavioral issues in the classroom, and how to place responsibility for good choices on the student. Perhaps as a result of their increased knowledge and early successes in handling behavioral issues in new ways, at some of the sites visited, there have been dramatic shifts in how staff see their work. That is, attitudes and job satisfaction have improved.

Behavioral changes among staff have been attributed to SEL as well. Teacher interactions with students have been positively affected. Interactions with students were often described as being more positive, and teachers say they are dealing more effectively with youth emotions. Specifically, there is less anger, more empathy, better communication and listening, and less yelling. Many teachers reported that improved student behavior is in turn leaving more classroom time for instruction.

Team members at some of the sites also noted that teacher interactions with each other have been positively affected. SEL Team members talked at length about the ways in which teachers are treating each other better. Teachers are more supportive of each other, have learned to become better listeners, and have become better communicators with each other. One team member said she has seen *"smiles on the faces of teachers who hardly ever smile!"* Each of these positive impacts interacts with the others to produce even more powerful school wide changes.

Impacts on Students

In addition to early impacts on staff, during the focus group discussions, team members also described a number of positive impacts on the students.

> *"They understand how to communicate with each other … it makes the day run very smoothly."*
>
> *"It has taught children to think about the choices they make and why they make those choices. Also, understanding how those choices affect others."*
>
> *"They're more calm about things. They talk things out instead of fighting them out."*
>
> *"They're more likely to say, 'excuse me,' and come to see you with a smile instead of a fist."*

Overall, SEL Teams talked more about the positive impacts of SEL on staff than on the students, and the impacts on students seemed to be more often reported by SEL Teams at elementary schools as opposed to high schools. The initial changes in behavior and attitude of students in the school setting are based on team member observation; often these observations were made in the hallways of the school building, on the playground, and sometimes in the community. According to team members, students have become more responsible for their own behavior – *"more autonomous and self-correcting,"* students are making better choices, they are more polite, they have learned to talk about issues rather than fight, and overall, the students are having more positive interactions with each other and with their teachers. Teachers say they are beginning to see the students use different interaction strategies with each other, as if they were modeling the ways the teachers interact with the students. According to SEL Team members, students are building positive, caring relationships with their teachers and other school staff. There is an increased feeling among students that they can talk to their teachers about topics other than schoolwork.

In addition to the observations of SEL Team members, some teams have quantitative data to further support these positive observations. School data supporting the positive impact on SEL on student behavior includes decreases in disciplinary problems, most notably fighting among students; a decreased number of expulsions; a decreased number of referrals on the school buses and a reduced number of students getting referrals overall; an increase in school attendance rates; and a small reduction in failing grades.

Impacts on School Climate

Finally, the focus group discussions revealed perceived SEL impacts on the school's climate.

> *"It has molded and shaped our school environment to be positive and welcoming."*
>
> *"It's a lot calmer in the Junior High."*
>
> *"it's not a scary hallway anymore."*
>
> *"'How should we act in the office? How should we act in the hallway?' It's not something that happens from 1 to 2; it's all the time."*

Based on SEL Team reports at the sites we visited, SEL has done much to create a *"positive and welcoming"* school environment. A school's climate encompasses the interactions among people in the building, the physical space, and the policies and procedures that help keep school operations running smoothly. In preceding sections, the positive changes in the quality of interactions among staff, between staff and students, and among students were described. These positive interactions clearly play a role in the school's climate, helping to make the school feel more welcoming, friendly, nurturing, and safe. Many report that the school is perceived as a calmer place – in the hallways and on the playgrounds for instance. In addition to an increase in positive interactions, one SEL Team described a change made to the physical space as a result of SEL planning. Specifically, the front door and front office space were re-designed to make the initial entry into the building more welcoming. Another team noted that new windows were installed which brightened the building. Finally, one SEL Team described embedding the SEL philosophy in the school's new mission statement, and another team worked to re-write the school's policy and procedures handbook to make it more user-friendly for parents. The SEL framework clearly has been used by a number of teams to improve school climate in a variety of ways. These positive impacts on the school environment translate into both a positive learning environment for the students as well as a positive working environment for the staff.

As a final note, members of the CPRD evaluation team felt it important to highlight the benefits of being able to articulate the positive impacts of SEL. Teams clearly benefit from discussion and recognition of their accomplishments along the way. During our focus group discussions with SEL Teams, team members were highly engaged in the discussion of impacts. Celebrating these successes helps to create a positive foundation for the future of the project, and celebrating all the small steps along the way helps to offset some of the challenges and obstacles faced and motivates teams to continue moving forward.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are in five primary areas:

1) Improving grant promotion and the application process
2) Improving training and coaching
3) Enhancing SEL team effectiveness
4) Gaining staff and administrative support for SEL
5) More effectively implementing SEL practices and programs

Improving Grant Promotion and the Application Process

The schools comprising this sample heard about the grant through a variety of means. While this is positive, we also found that many schools did not hear of the grant through their own district office. One result of this is that fewer schools may have applied for the grant than anticipated, allowing for less selectivity in the grant award process.

Recommendation:

- Develop a more systematic way to promote the grant to all schools statewide relying on multiple communication channels to reach a variety of school based professionals like student

support personnel and administrators at the district and building levels within districts. ISBE's prioritization and promotion of RtI provides a good model.

While several school districts in this sample applied for the grant at the district or administrative level, most districts focused their work on the building level. This created some confusion among the different buildings that comprised the district. Grant funds may not be sufficient to simultaneously plan district-wide and within multiple buildings.

Recommendations:

- Implement SEL standards in planned phases over several years across the district, moving from one building to the next. Design grant expectations and awards to support this form of planning and implementation.

- Where the grant is operating district-wide across several buildings, create a district-level communication strategy to facilitate cross-building coordination.

Regarding timelines of the grant requirements, several team members requested that future RFPs more closely align with the existing planning cycles of schools to ease and improve the process.

Recommendation:

- Design the RFP and timelines with planning cycle and school calendars in mind and then provide an advance calendar of SEL requirements and training events to all potential applicants. Also, consider uniform grant requirements for all related school initiatives: PBIS, RtI, MH Support.

In some cases, the SEL grants were awarded to schools that lacked sufficient readiness. In other cases, grants were awarded to schools with plans or goals that did not match the SEL grant requirements.

Recommendations:

- Develop a readiness and capacity assessment tool as part of the RFP process that assesses and weighs school readiness for SEL planning and implementation. Readiness factors should include need, receptivity of all key stakeholder levels, prior SEL programming, and specific plans addressing the logistics of the process, including where team meetings will fit into the schedule, ensuring parental involvement, evidence of support from the school principal, and a full description of how SEL will be integrated with other similar initiatives.

- Provide pre-grant assessment and coaching for schools lacking sufficient readiness for SEL implementation.

Focus group participants pointed out that there was little if any accountability for meeting SEL standards (as there is for academic standards). This tends to reduce school-wide buy-in to SEL as staff focus on other more immediate academic problems and needs such as attaining AYP. However, focus groups also revealed that some schools realized a connection between achieving SEL-related goals and academic goals. This realization greatly enhances buy-in to the SEL framework.

Recommendations:

- Determine how schools might be held accountable for SEL Standards and how such accountability might be assessed.

- Clearly communicate to schools that achieving SEL standards is directly related to improvements in academics, including improving standardized testing scores, for which schools are held accountable perhaps relying on the latest research available on the CASEL web-site.

Improving Training and Coaching

<u>Training</u>

Team members valued the training as well as the resource materials and the tool kit developed by CASEL. Trainers practiced and modeled SEL principles during the trainings. However, some team members felt that there should be different tracks for different types of schools and for schools at different levels of SEL development and implementation. Schools that had already 'bought into' and understood SEL needed to make concrete SEL implementation decisions and others felt that spending a day learning about the state SEL standards and why they were important was not a good use of their time. Participants felt that some of their more valuable training arose from opportunities for contact with near-peers who were slightly further along than they were in SEL implementation.

Recommendations:

- Structure training modules to accommodate the different implementation strategies based on school structure such as high school, middle school, elementary and preschool.

- Training should be developmentally appropriate based on school readiness and the participant schools' level of SEL implementation.

- Offer regional trainings at multiple locations that are responsive to the needs of schools including transportation and time away.

- Provide more networking and perhaps field trip opportunities in order to learn from those who are ahead, not those in the same level of development.

- Coordinate online and in person networking opportunities for teams.

- Develop an annual paper and pencil or online survey, as part of a state level planning process, to seek input about training needs and preferences from schools actively working on their SEL standards implementation.

Most teams that we spoke with agreed that the trainings provided a good foundation for SEL principles and concepts. At the same time this foundational focus produced a commonly expressed frustration that participants wanted someone to simply "tell them what to do."

Recommendations:

- Trainings should balance the participant's need to be directed and the necessity to shape a unique response to the challenge of implementing SEL practices in one's own setting.

- Training transfer may be enhanced and participant frustration reduced if SEL concepts are presented with a examples of actual school-based applications. Tying the conceptual to the concrete will assist teams in designing their own unique applications.

Coaching

Overall, team surveys showed that a majority of team members rate their coaches as "good" or "excellent." In addition, we found a significant positive correlation between the frequency of contact with the coach and satisfaction with the coach, and both of these are positively related to school-wide support of SEL and effective team planning. All of these suggest an effective coaching system. In fact, all but a few teams in the study were satisfied with their coaches, although there was a degree of variability in the level of satisfaction. Focus groups further elaborated that most teams recognized the professional competence of their coaches, in particular, their knowledge of SEL principles. Coaches were also reportedly quick to respond to inquiries and provide requested information and were generally available to the whole team as a resource as needed. Beyond that there were many differences in coaching styles ranging from nearly absent, to limiting themselves merely to a role of grant manager, up through an active participant on the team. One comment arose that sometimes coaches have only limited knowledge of the specific, unique circumstances and situations   of the schools they are coaching. Teams and coaches themselves agree that in addition to knowledge of SEL, coaches should possess knowledge of how schools work and knowledge of how to lead a team through a process of change. From the perspective of several coaches, funder's had occasional need to learn about site progress and there was not a good mechanism to share that information without competing for limited coach development time.

Recommendations:

- Clarify job requirements, required skill sets, and expectations of coaches.

- Continue to provide regularly scheduled (i.e., monthly) individual and (i.e., quarterly) group supervision for coaches. Using a model requiring coaches to present actual cases and issues would build coaching skills and help the supervisor to more readily assess skill deficits and provide timely guidance in difficult cases. Due to the statewide nature of the project, with staff spread out across the state, consider using web cam conferencing to enhance the supervisory experience.

- Develop a process to correct a poor fit between a coach and a team. Use feedback mechanisms, for example, like a regular review of the coach-team relationship to make this a formalized part of the SEL process. This review should not be seen as a way of monitoring the team or the coach's performance, but rather assessing the coach-team fit.

- Provide formal and informal professional development to enhance the necessary basic and more advanced skills involved in this work. Since Coaches come to this role with a wide range of

background experiences, take advantage of this diversity by having the coaches do presentations on their areas of expertise, where appropriate.

- In order to keep funders apprised of site progress, create a brief reporting process or communication mechanism through the supervising coach rather than using limited coach development time.

Enhancing SEL Team Effectiveness

The development of an effective team is critical to the success of the overall SEL planning and implementation process. Team functioning was enhanced when roles were clearly identified, like leader, secretary, and grade level liaison. More highly developed programs (explain what you mean by "more highly developed programs") tended to have additional formal roles established. On the other hand, lack of role clarity and expectations contributed to frustration about expectations for task completion, and the perception in some cases of lack of progress in the project. It was not always apparent that SEL Team members had a full understanding of *why* they were asked to join the SEL Team.

Recommendations:

- Teams should be encouraged to establish a regular meeting time, to identify a secretary to take minutes, and to prepare and distribute agendas in advance of each meeting. In addition, the minutes should clearly identify tasks and who each is assigned to; follow up on assignments at the next meeting.

- Integrate team collaboration and coordination into training.

- Articulate the operational and professional roles to be taken on an SEL Team and how each of these roles contribute to SEL planning and implementation. This will help sites to more effectively recruit team members, maintain team excitement for the project, and ultimately improve implementation and outcomes.

The grant required that team membership include a principal, teachers, a parent and relevant student services personnel, and most teams adhered to these requirements. At the sites we visited, team members sometimes also included nurses, counselors, special education teachers, and psychologists. In some cases, security personnel, bus drivers, janitors and cafeteria staff were considered to be part of the SEL implementation process.

Recommendation:

- Team composition guidelines should remain as is, but teams could be provided guidance for involving other types of personnel including people such as school security staff, janitors, secretaries, bus drivers and cafeteria workers in the SEL process, if roles and functions can be clearly defined.

Challenges in securing a parent to serve on the team revealed a need to support and more clearly define the expectations of the parent member. Some teams included Parent Advocates, a position funded through a DHS Mental Health in Schools grant on the SEL Team. The Parent Advocate understands the needs and problems of parents and can provide leadership in engaging parents in the community. In

most cases, SEL parent representatives were otherwise already very active within the school setting, serving as a PTO member or chair or substitute teacher.

Recommendations:

- Explore ways to expand the availability of Parent Advocates for SEL implementation.

- More clearly articulate and support, perhaps with honoraria for participation, the expectations and responsibilities of the parent member,

- Explore more feasible ways than team representation to seek input of parents regarding SEL implementation (ie: parent meetings or focus groups connected to critical decision points in the planning and implementation of SEL).

Turnover challenges team effectiveness. Newer members generally had less access to training, diminishing their capacity to contribute to the process, and perhaps even slowing progress as teams must take time to find and orient new members.

Recommendations:

- Reduce turnover by recruiting team members who can make a commitment of 3 years.

- Consider and develop materials and ways to orient and train new members on teams so that they will be able to contribute sooner. A new SEL Team Member training, perhaps web-based, and formal buddy systems might mitigate the effects of this ongoing issue.

SEL Teams that participated in focus groups stressed the importance of recognizing their SEL accomplishments. During our focus group discussions with SEL Teams, team members appeared highly engaged in the discussion of impacts. Teams suggested that celebrating successes offsets challenges and obstacles, motivates teams to move forward and creates a positive foundation for the future.

Recommendations:

- SEL teams should have in place a systematic, formal process for gathering success stories, including positive impacts on staff and on students. To heighten awareness, they should recognize their own small but important successes.

- Quarterly reports should include questions about 'small step' impacts, and other opportunities to share successes should be provided. This will help teams understand that SEL is an iterative process which in turn helps in sustaining SEL efforts.

Gaining Administrative and Staff Support for SEL

Administrative Support

School administrators, typically the principal, were to play a major role in the grant application, in assembling the SEL Team, and in the initial phases of the project (if not longer). Most teams perceived

that their administrators were supportive of the process. In a few cases, administrators were thought of as supportive, but took a more 'hands-off' approach in which they granted the team broad latitude, but did not use their leadership position to the fullest, leaving other school personnel to feel SEL was not important. School administrators were crucial because they set the initial direction for the project and insured adequate time to meet.

Recommendations:

- First and foremost, gain the commitment and support for SEL of key administrators. Be sure they buy into, and are enthusiastic about, SEL implementation in their school. Without this, SEL may be viewed as optional by teachers and staff.

- Responsibilities of administrators should be clearly identified and guided.

- School administrators should be very familiar with strengths and weaknesses of school personnel as they assemble their SEL team.

- School administrators should provide adequate meeting time and space for teams to accomplish their objectives.

- Building administrators should attend the statewide trainings along with the SEL Teams.

Several teams lost essential administrative support due to transitions and turn over among school board members and superintendents and sometimes building principals.

Recommendations:

- To maintain progress on SEL during transitions, develop presentation materials to help administrators 'sell' SEL to their replacements. These materials would address why SEL matters and why SEL should be a priority within the school and/or district. It could include state and local data supporting the need and/or benefits of for SEL programming.

- Online learning communities for each grant cohort could act as a peer-modeling and support group for administrators that are new to the project.

- Develop presentation materials and templates to be used by new administrators to help them continue to 'sell' SEL to their faculty, their superintendent, other colleagues, new school board members.

<u>Staff Support</u>

Teams were keenly aware of their need and responsibility to assess staff receptivity and develop strategies to gain staff support for SEL implementation. Most teams identified the need to introduce changes or requirements of school staff in ways that would be sensitive to other, higher priorities.., For elementary staff, this meant providing complete and clear curriculum materials that were ready for implementation.. In contrast, high school staff wanted greater input into decisions about curriculum selection, pilot and adaptation processes.

Recommendation:

- Provide opportunities for teams at different grade level groups to share effective strategies for gaining staff support across schools

Teams identified that teachers themselves had SEL skill development needs and commented that finding ways to support teachers would be essential for SEL success in their school. In many cases, teams felt that the teachers themselves would benefit from SEL training and that teachers need to more consciously model SEL behavior with students as well as among each other.

Recommendation:

- Develop SEL practice guidelines to support the creation of healthy SEL environments for the school staff. Guidelines might include how to establish ongoing professional development, teacher and all staff mentoring and wellness programming, Employee Assistance Programs, and less formal mechanisms to naturally help school staff gain comfort with SEL skills and behaviors.

More Effectively Implementing SEL Practices and Programs

Most SEL teams recognized that CASEL's SEL implementation model included the development of school-wide SEL practices simultaneously with the selection of a specific SEL curriculum. In practice, teams struggled with how to do this. Some focused their efforts more directly on adopting an SEL curriculum while others pursued school-wide practices in advance of curriculum selection. As the second year progressed from planning into implementation, teams that had not yet adopted a curriculum felt increasing pressure from their coaches and from the funders to adopt a specific SEL curriculum.

Recommendations:

- Whole school or school-wide approaches should be balanced with curriculum-based approaches to SEL implementation.

- In some cases, it may be more appropriate to implement general school-wide SEL staff development trainings prior to implementing a specific curriculum.

- Coach facilitated organizational planning sessions for teams may create the space and the setting to make decisions on how to balance the implementation of school wide and curricular programs.

Teams recognized and promoted the notion of SEL as a framework or umbrella that encompasses many efforts going on at the school on a day-to-day basis. For example, some schools pointed out how they consciously applied SEL principles in redrafting their student handbook; another school improved school lighting as part of their SEL approach.

Recommendation:

- Encourage the team practice of collecting and sharing stories of concrete SEL applications throughout the building as a way to enhance implementation of SEL and promote the idea of SEL as a framework.

<u>Integrating with other Initiatives</u>

A number of schools had SEL-focused programming already in place. In some cases, prior experience worked as a barrier because the school staff may believe they are already doing what needs to be done and they become less open to new SEL learning opportunities. Specifically, it may decrease their openness to new ideas and full engagement in the learning process. Some teams felt that different initiatives being simultaneously implemented in their schools created competing demands on the resources of the 'same old' group of faculty, with the necessity of going to multiple monthly meetings impinging on their time in the classroom. Some schools have attempted to rectify this by viewing SEL as an 'umbrella' and other initiatives as underneath it, or with SEL as being part of a larger more general initiative. In general, teams were challenged by the need to simultaneously implement very similar – but not completely similar – SEL-like initiatives.

Recommendations:

- Grant requirements for SEL, PBIS, MH Support Grants, and RtI should be reviewed to maximize resources and minimize duplicative effort in team membership, grant reporting, assessments, coaching, training and timelines.

- Openly and directly compare and contrast these initiatives in trainings and in meetings with coaches.

- Information and training should emphasize the ways in which SEL, PBIS, MH Support Grants, and RtI are related and how they can be leveraged to maximize limited human resources and minimize overlap and duplication.

- At the end of the planning phase and before the implementation phase, sites should be required to describe how these initiatives will be coordinated to avoid duplication and overlap, and prioritized or paced to optimize success.

Summary

We learned a great deal from the SEL sites that we visited, both about the mechanics of the SEL planning and implementation process, and also about the more global issues that schools are facing. SEL Team members from across the state offered numerous suggestions for how the planning and implementation process might be improved, and armed with a deeper understanding of the challenges schools are facing, the state funders may be able to make additional improvements to the statewide system of support for SEL implementation.

Receiving the SEL grant clearly enhanced the sites' awareness of ISBE's SEL standards and the potential benefits of SEL-related programming and practices. For many of the sites, the SEL model provides a framework that helps schools to focus on and plan for addressing the needs of the whole child. While addressing the needs of the whole child is a laudable goal, for many this concept remains somewhat vague. That is, many schools still do not have a sense of full scale, school wide SEL implementation nor the road map to get there. The SEL Teams we visited tended to focus on the selection and adoption of an evidence-based SEL program, which most find challenging, or the creation of a new school culture, which is even more challenging. Most teams focused on both, either simultaneously or sequentially. Both of these approaches are reflected in CASEL's model of the planning and implementation process, but the specific steps required for school wide implementation should be further delineated. Many content areas use benchmarks and assessment to help chart that course.

As the original SEL sites approach the end of their funding period, sustainability becomes a key concern. Although ISBE has included SEL in the state's standards for quality education, nevertheless, most if not all of the sites that we visited did not perceive SEL as a mandate. Scores on standardized tests and achieving AYP remain the clear priorities for the teachers at the schools we visited. Understanding the link between SEL principles and improved school achievement is essential. Changing these views will require much more focused and sustained statewide coordination and leadership, but the shift in focus will be a welcome and positive change for many in the school community.

Attachments

1. SEL Team Survey
2. School Administrator Survey
3. School Team Focus Group Questions
4. SEL Coach Interview Protocol

SEL Team Member Survey

Today's date:
School Name

Background

What is your primary role at this school? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Parent (go to question x below)
- ☐ Classroom teacher
- ☐ Special education / resource teacher
- ☐ Teacher's aide
- ☐ Psychologist / counselor / social worker
- ☐ Nurse
- ☐ Clerical support
- ☐ Non-clerical support (e.g., cafeteria worker, maintenance, transportation)
- ☐ Community representative
- ☐ Other:_____

School Staff (the questions in this section of the survey should be answered by school staff only; parents can skip ahead to the next section of the survey)

Do you have a full-time or part-time position at this school?

- ☐ Full time
- ☐ Part-time

How long have you worked in the field of education?   ____ years

How long have you worked at this school?   _____ years

Which of the following content certification/endorsements have your received?

- ☐ elementary certification
- ☐ secondary certification
- ☐ administrative certification
- ☐ special education
- ☐ provisional certification
- ☐ uncertified
- ☐ other_____

Parents (the questions in this section of the survey should be answered by parents of students at this school; others can skip ahead to the next section of the survey)

How many children do you have attending this school? (please check one)

- ☐ none
- ☐ one
- ☐ two
- ☐ three or more

For how many years have you had children attending this school? _____ years

About the Coach and Training Activities

Over the past year, how often have you had contact with the SEL coach? (please check one)

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Frequently

Over the past year, approximately how many times has your school's SEL team met with their SEL coach? _____ meetings

For each of the following statements, please indicate your level of satisfaction.

Statement	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Overall, how would you rate the quality of the training/support/information provided by your SEL coach?				
How well did your coach assist your team in understanding the importance of SEL ?				
How would you rate your coaches understanding of the SEL needs of a school like yours?				
Overall, how would you rate the quality of resources (trainings, TA, materials, other assistance, etc.) that the SEL coach has provided for increasing the capacity of team members to develop an SEL implementation plan?				
How would you rate the access or amount of time that your school received from your assigned coach?				

SEL Implementation Experiences

How long have you been a member of this SEL team? _____ months

Approximately, how many times has this SEL team met over the past year? _____ meetings

Approximately, how many meetings have you attended as part of the SEL team? _____ meetings

For each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement by marking a number 1 (strong disagreement) to 5 (strong agreement).

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am familiar with the vision/goals and practices of SEL at our school.	1	2	3	4	5
I support the vision/goals and practices of SEL standards at our school	1	2	3	4	5
There is school-wide support for implementing the SEL standards at our school.	1	2	3	4	5
Our team has a clear understanding of the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5
Most parents at this school are aware of the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5
Our school already has many SEL programs and activities in place.	1	2	3	4	5
Many teachers at our school will not want to implement SEL programs and activities.	1	2	3	4	5

Students at our school will benefit from implementing the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5
Implementing SEL standards in our school will improve academic achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
Implementing SEL standards in our school will improve student behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
Our team submitted a high quality plan for SEL implementation.	1	2	3	4	5
Our SEL plan provides clear guidance and direction for incorporating the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5
Implementing SEL standards at my school is very different from what staff already do at our school.	1	2	3	4	5
Our staff believe that SEL is an important component of a child's education.	1	2	3	4	5
Our school has the knowledge, skills and capacity to implement the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5
Our parents have a clear understanding of the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5
Our community has a clear understanding of the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5
Our school will effectively implement SEL programs and practices.	1	2	3	4	5
There is administrative support for implementing the SEL standards and practices at our school.	1	2	3	4	5
I will need to learn a lot of new skills to implement the SEL standards and our plan.	1	2	3	4	5
Our SEL coach has an expert knowledge of implementing SEL standards in our school.	1	2	3	4	5
The SEL coach is able to support my learning of SEL practices.	1	2	3	4	5

Which types of training and professional development (e.g., 2 day training, 3 day follow-up, others) did you find to be most helpful and why?

_____
_____
_____

What additional training topics would be helpful to you?

_____
_____
_____

What have been the major obstacles/barriers for your school to implementing the SEL plan?

_____
_____
_____

What do you perceive as the greatest SEL issues of students at your school? (community, family, school, and individual risk factors such as poverty, peer pressure, family crisis, etc.)

_____
_____
_____

What external resources or community experts have you used to assist in the SEL planning and implementation?

_____
_____
_____

In what ways has the SEL project impacted your school to this point?

_____
_____
_____

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your involvement in the SEL project?

_____
_____
_____

SEL
School Administrator Survey

Today's Date:
School Name:

What is your primary role at this school? (check all that apply)

- ☐ District Administrator (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director)
- ☐ Principal
- ☐ Assistant Principal
- ☐ Dean
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

How many years have you been in this role? _____ years

How long have you been in this role at this school or in this district? _____ years

Which of the following content certification/endorsements have your received? (check all that apply)

- ☐ elementary certification
- ☐ secondary certification
- ☐ administrative certification
- ☐ special education
- ☐ provisional certification
- ☐ uncertified
- ☐ other (please specify): _____

Are you a member of the SEL Team at this school? (please check one)

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

Approximately, how many times has this SEL team met over the past year? _____ meetings

Approximately, how many meetings of the SEL team have you attended? _____ meetings

Over the past year, how often have you had contact with the SEL coach? (please check one)

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Frequently

Over the past year, approximately how many times has your school's SEL team met with their SEL coach? _____ meetings

Attitudes toward SEL Implementation

For each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement by marking a number 1 (strong disagreement) to 5 (strong agreement).

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree
I am familiar with the vision/goals and practices of SEL at our school.	1	2	3	4	5
I support the vision/goals and practices of SEL standards at our school.	1	2	3	4	5
There is school-wide support for implementing the SEL standards at our school.	1	2	3	4	5
Our team has a clear understanding of the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5
Most parents at this school are aware of the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5
Our school already has many SEL programs and activities in place.	1	2	3	4	5
Many teachers at our school will not want to implement SEL programs and activities.	1	2	3	4	5
Students at our school will benefit from implementing the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5
Implementing SEL standards in our school will improve academic achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
Implementing SEL standards in our school will improve student behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
Our team submitted a high quality plan for SEL implementation.	1	2	3	4	5
Our SEL plan provides clear guidance and direction for incorporating the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5
Implementing SEL standards at my school is very different from what staff already do at our school.	1	2	3	4	5
Our staff believe that SEL is an important component of a child's education.	1	2	3	4	5
Our school has the knowledge, skills and capacity to implement the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5
Our parents have a clear understanding of the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5
Our community has a clear understanding of the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5
Our school will effectively implement SEL programs and practices.	1	2	3	4	5
I support the implementation of SEL standards and practices at this school.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers will need to learn new skills to implement the SEL standards and our plan.	1	2	3	4	5
SEL programs and activities will be easily integrated with our other student programs.	1	2	3	4	5
Our staff is well prepared to implement the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5

As a result of SEL standards implementation, our staff are better prepared to serve students and families.	1	2	3	4	5
Our school has a clear plan for how it wants to implement the SEL standards.	1	2	3	4	5

What have been the major obstacles/barriers for your school in developing and implementing the SEL plan?

_____
_____
_____

What do you perceive as the greatest SEL issues of students at your school? (community, family, school, and individual risk factors such as poverty, peer pressure, family crisis, etc.)

_____
_____
_____

In what ways has the SEL project impacted your school to this point?

_____
_____
_____

How do you view your role in the implementation of SEL standards?

_____
_____
_____

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your involvement in the SEL project?

_____
_____
_____

SEL Implementation Evaluation
Focus Group Interview Protocol

<u>Instructions</u>: Remember to distribute, review, & gather signed consent forms before beginning the group discussion. Also, administer the team member survey prior to the discussion. Collect the completed surveys & place them in a sealed envelope. Members of the focus group should include all team members, except SEL coaches and school administrators. (Administrators receive a different survey.) Finally, when asking the questions that focus on the school, remind the group which school is targeted for our case study.

1) How did your school decide to apply for the SEL planning and implementation grant?

2) How did your team decide on which SEL activities to adopt? How will they be adapted, if at all?

3) How, if at all, have your beliefs regarding SEL changed as a result of participating on the team?

4) What is it like being on the SEL team? How is your SEL team organized (is there a chair person, are there regularly scheduled meetings, are meeting minutes taken)? What are the roles assigned (if any) to members of your SEL team?

5) How receptive do you think the rest of the school faculty and staff will be to implement the SEL standards? How would you rate your building's commitment to implementing SEL standards?

6) How well is your school prepared to implement the SEL standards? In what areas do you believe you and your school are not well prepared?

7) How do the SEL standards relate to other programs, policies and practices that currently exist in your building (e.g., PBIS, Mental Health Support Grants, RTI)

8) What are the obstacles and barriers to implementing the SEL standards at your school?

9) What is the process for how you will carry out your SEL standards implementation?

10) Overall, what does the school administration think about the SEL programs, policies and practices?

11) How would you describe the role of your coach in facilitating the planning of the SEL standards implementation?

12) What types of resources does the SEL support team provide? Of all the resources (training and technical assistance) provided by the SEL support team, which do you find most helpful and why? Which do you find least helpful and why?

13) How can ISBE and IVPA do a better job to better prepare schools and staff for incorporating the SEL standards?

14) Staff: Has the SEL had an impact on the way that you think about or work with students and families at your school? Parents: What changes have you observed in the way that the school operates?

15) Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your involvement in the SEL implementation?

SEL CASE STUDY EVALUATION
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – SEL COACHES

1. How many SEL teams do you work with?

2. How were you selected to serve as an SEL coach? How did you come to be involved in the SEL Implementation Project?

3. What prior experience / knowledge did you have of SEL when you first became a coach? How have your beliefs regarding SEL changed as a result of serving as a coach?

4. What prior experience / knowledge did you have of school-based coaching and consultation practices when you first became involved in the SEL Implementation Project?

5. In your view, what qualities and characteristics make a coach effective?   What methods / practices or skills make a coach effective?

6. How do you view your role as an SEL coach? What services / resources do you provide to the team(s) you work with?

7. How receptive have your SEL teams been to what you have to offer?

8. What have been the major obstacles and barriers in coaching the SEL team(s) that you work with?

9. What evidence have you seen / do you look for to show that there is teacher support for SEL? What about administrative support for SEL?

10. In what areas have you been most effective in improving team capacity to implement SEL standards? In what areas have you been least effective?

11. How can ISBE / IVPA / ICMHP do a better job in _selecting_ grantees to implement SEL standards?

12. How can ISBE and IVPA do a better job in _supporting_ grantees to implement SEL standards?

13. What resources does the SEL implementation project provide to you in your role as coach? What is your overall impression of these resources? What additional resources do you need to be even more effective as a coach?

14. What factors most influence or support your ability to serve as a coach for this project? (personal characteristics and experiences, training and assistance provided to you by the project, etc.)

15. In what areas do you feel most prepared to serve as an SEL coach? In what areas do you feel not as prepared?

16. What can ISBE / IVPA / ICMHP do to better prepare / better support you in your role as SEL coach?

17. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your involvement in the SEL Implementation Project?