



CASEL's Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI)

As schools take responsibility for preparing students to succeed in a complex and rapidly changing world, educators are increasingly emphasizing social and emotional learning (SEL). A growing body of research supports the idea that developing students' social and emotional competence is essential for academic and life success, and a variety of evidence-based programs and practices are available for use in schools and classrooms. However, programs alone may not be enough. Decades of research on implementation of educational innovations suggest that broad, enduring changes are best achieved when there is alignment and integration at multiple levels of the educational system (i.e., state, district,

school, and classroom).

Given the importance of district-level leadership and coordination, in 2011 CASEL launched a national initiative aimed at supporting districts' capacities to promote SEL for all students. Called the Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI), this effort recognizes that positive student outcomes depend on improving classrooms and schools, which in turn depends on improving districtwide capacities and conditions. To promote such systemic changes, CASEL is partnering with eight large urban school districts and using a theory of action that addresses the essential elements (see reverse).

Social and Emotional Learning is Critical

Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Through collaboration, CASEL, NoVo Foundation, and district leaders create systemic changes in a variety of district-level activities and procedures relevant to the implementation of social and emotional learning districtwide. CASEL's *inputs* to collaborating districts provide needed support for key district *activities* that are expected to achieve crucial district-level *outcomes*. These outcomes will leverage changes at the school and classroom level that lead to positive social, emotional, and academic outcomes for all students.

CASEL and NoVo Foundation expect the CDI to catalyze changes in a variety of district-level activities and procedures relevant to SEL implementation.

Social & Emotional Learning Core Competencies



Districts Receive

- *District systems development consultation* – each district receives a senior systems development advisor
- *Staff development consultation* – assistance developing coherent, sustainable professional development plans
- *Action research framework* – to continually gather information; reflect on the impact of policies, programs, and practices; and make decisions based on available data
- *Connections to evidence-based SEL program providers and other external partners* – to implement coordinated, sustainable SEL programming
- *Planning and implementation tools* – resources to help district leaders and staff organize their SEL efforts
- *Access to grant funding from NoVo Foundation* – planning grant of \$125,000 and implementation grants up to \$750,000 over three years

Districts Commit To

- Assess the district's SEL-related needs and resources
- Develop a clear SEL vision and detailed long-term plans for SEL
- Develop and adopt SEL learning standards and assessments
- Adopt evidence-based SEL programs
- Design professional development program to build internal capacity
- Integrate SEL with existing district initiatives
- Align budgets and staffing to support SEL
- Monitor SEL implementation process and outcomes
- Establish a plan for communicating with stakeholders about SEL
- Participate in a cross-district evaluation and learning community with other districts

Districts achieve

- Student success with positive academic and behavioral outcomes
- SEL school program implementation
- Integration of SEL with academic content and pedagogy
- Quality SEL-related professional development
- Systems for accountability and continuous improvement
- Stakeholders' commitment to SEL as a priority
- Positive system-wide and school-wide climate
- Strong student-parent-teacher relationships

Collaborating Districts

Of the eight collaborating districts, three have received implementation grants of up to \$750,000 over three years:

- Anchorage School District, AK
- Austin Independent School District, TX
- Cleveland Metropolitan School District, OH

The remaining five districts received planning grants of \$125,000 and implementation grants of up to \$750,000 over a three-year period:

- Chicago Public Schools, IL
- Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, TN
- Oakland Unified School District, CA
- Sacramento City Unified School District, CA
- Washoe County School District, NV

All collaborating districts are among the 200 largest school districts in the country.

For more information

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CASEL's mission is to establish social and emotional learning as an essential part of education. We are committed to advancing the science of social and emotional learning (SEL); expanding integrated, evidence-based SEL practice; and strengthening the field and impact of SEL.

For more information on CASEL, the CDI, or SEL, please visit
www.casel.org

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