2015

CASEL GUIDE

Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs

Middle and High School Edition

CASEL

Acknowledgements

CASEL

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

CASEL is dedicated to advancing the science and practice of school-based social and emotional learning (SEL). CASEL's mission is to help make social and emotional learning an integral part of education from preschool through high school.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

About This Guide

Evidence-based programs designed to promote positive outcomes and prevent problem behavior in students are increasingly being used in educational settings. They have evolved out of different traditions including education, public health, psychology, prevention science, positive youth development, character education, and social and emotional learning (SEL). The *2015 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs—Middle and High School Edition* identifies school-based programs that have been evaluated with middle and high school students and that promote students' social and emotional competence.

The *2015 CASEL Guide* applies a systematic framework for assessing the quality of SEL programs. Specifically, the *Guide* identifies and rates well-designed, evidence-based SEL programs with potential for broad dissemination to schools across the United States. The main purpose of the *Guide* is to give educators information for selecting and implementing SEL programs in their districts and schools. The *Guide* also describes the significant advances the SEL field has made in the past decade, establishes new definitions of SEL at the secondary level, provides suggestions for future research and practice in SEL, and describes innovative approaches to educational practice (e.g., programs that promote mindful awareness) that may also contribute to students' social and emotional development.

This *Guide i*s primarily an electronic document that resides on CASEL's website. This format allows it to be revised and updated continually. Our intention is to make the CASEL reviews as accessible, timely, and user-friendly as possible. Following the release of the *Middle and High School Edition* we will be accepting nominations for new preschool and elementary programs to be added to the *2013 Guide*, which will be updated and released in a comprehensive *Guide* that covers grades Pre-K-12.

The Importance of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process 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. Social and emotional skills are critical to being a good student, citizen, and worker, and many risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying, and dropping out) can be prevented or reduced when multiyear, integrated efforts are used to develop students' social and emotional skills.

The past 20 years have witnessed an explosion of interest in this important developmental domain (Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Gullotta, 2015). Research reviews have appeared documenting the value of SEL programs (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Sklad, Diekstra, De Ritter, & Ben, 2012). Schools, families,

and communities are increasingly recognizing the importance of promoting the social and emotional competence of youth in order to facilitate both academic and life success (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010). A growing body of research has documented the factors that contribute to the effective implementation of SEL programs. Many of the highest-quality program developers have taken this research into account in designing their programs and their professional development models. Also, federal, state, and local policies are beginning to reflect the increasing interest in SEL and its importance for the healthy development of young people.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is a worldwide leader in advancing SEL science, evidence-based practice, and policy. CASEL believes that effective SEL programming begins in preschool and continues through high school and envisions a time when every school in the nation will provide evidence-based SEL programming to all students at all levels.

CASEL has identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies. The five competency clusters are:

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

Social and emotional competence is a fundamental element of academic success. Although research suggests that course completion and grades in middle school are the strongest predictors of high school performance and graduation (Farrington et al., 2012), there is increasing evidence that social and emotional competence is critical to academic engagement and long-term academic achievement (Durlak et al., 2011). Several recent publications on college and career readiness, deeper learning, and 21st-century skills cite social and emotional competencies, often called "noncognitive skills," as fundamental to students' level of engagement in middle and high school, their post-secondary performance and completion, and their workplace success (ACT, 2014; National Research Council, 2012).

SEL programs are one of the most successful interventions to promote the positive development of students. Research findings from hundreds of controlled studies indicate that SEL programming improves students' academic achievement and positive social behavior while reducing their conduct problems and emotional distress (Durlak et al., 2011; Sklad et al., 2012). Longitudinal studies have shown that increased social and emotional competence is related to reductions in a variety of problem behaviors including aggression, delinquency, substance use, and dropout (Aspy, Oman, Veseley, McLeroy, Rodine, & Marshall, 2004; Bradshaw, Rodgers, Ghandour, & Garbarino, 2009; Moffitt et al., 2011).

SEL Programs for Middle and High Schools

Although many worthwhile SEL programs are currently available, to be

included in the *2015 CASEL Guide* and designated as the highest level of quality (i.e., *SELect*), programs had to meet the following design, implementation, and evaluation criteria:

- Be **well-designed** school-based programs that intentionally and comprehensively promote students' development across the CASEL five competency clusters, provide opportunities for practice, and are offered over multiple years.

- Deliver high-quality **training and other implementation supports,** including initial training and ongoing support to ensure sound implementation.

- Show **evidence of effectiveness** with at least one carefully conducted evaluation using a comparison group and pre- and post-test measurement and demonstrating a positive impact on a student behavioral outcome.

The *2015 CASEL Guide* provides information on nine *SELect* programs. It also reviews five programs designated as *complementary* and one *promising* program. Six of the SELect programs target youth in middle school (grades 6-8), and five are designed to be used with high school students (grades 9-12). The programs in the *Guide* vary in the approach they take to promoting students' social and emotional learning, but all positively impact students.

The *CASEL Guide* summarizes objective information about the charac-teristics of nationally available programs in a clear, easy-to-read "consumer report" format. The program characteristics in the review are important for high-quality programming. They include the grade range that each program targets and the settings (classroom, school, family, community) in which the program promotes and reinforces the target skills. The *Guide* also provides information about professional development and implementation support and details about the findings of the programs' evaluation studies.

CASEL believes that using high-quality evidence-based programs is critically important in fostering students' social and emotional development. Although all of the CASEL programs meet basic effectiveness criteria and SELect programs meet a more rigorous standard, the outcomes of the programs vary. Most demonstrated impacts on students' behavior, with outcomes such as positive social behavior and the reduction of conduct problems. Several also showed positive impacts on students' academic performance, particularly those that integrate SEL instruction into academic content. A few programs showed effects on emotional distress.

CASEL endorses the use of evidence-based SEL programs in the context of systemic schoolwide and districtwide approaches (Devaney et al., 2006; Meyers, Gil, Cross, Keister, Domitrovich, & Weissberg, 2015). This starts with choosing the SEL program that best matches the goals of the school or district with regard to its desired outcomes. A section of this *Guide* offers a step-by-step process for how to make a successful selection. Beyond choosing and effectively implementing the cho-

sen SEL program, a systemic approach to SEL programming entails integrating SEL across school activities, both in and outside of the classroom, and even reaching into the community. The quality of program implementation is also a function of how prepared schools are when they adopt an SEL program, the extent to which all staff members are involved in that decision, and whether or not there is real commitment to training and implementation support. When districts and schools support high-quality program implementation, the impact of SEL programs is significantly strengthened (Durlak et al., 2011).

In addition to specific SELect, Complementary, and Promising programs, this *Guide* describes a variety of other innovative SEL-related approaches for the secondary level. We anticipate that over time many of these programs will develop the necessary research base for inclusion in this *Guide*. If your district or school is just beginning to explore SEL, the *Guide* will help you and your colleagues in your planning and selection of strong, evidence-based social and emotional learning programs that serve your students' needs. If you are seeking to deepen SEL practices you have already begun, the *Guide* will help you reflect on and augment your efforts.

Introduction

Definition of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process 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.

Social and emotional skills are critical to being a good student, citizen, and worker, and many risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying and dropping out) can be prevented or reduced when multiyear, integrated efforts are used to develop students' social and emotional skills. As shown in Figure 1, this is best done through multiple environments in which student learning takes place: (1) effective classroom curriculum and instruction, (2) a school climate, policies, and practices that promote student engagement in positive activities in and out of the classroom, and (3) broad family and community involvement in program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

SEL programming is based on the understanding that the best learning emerges in the context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging, and meaningful. Effective SEL programming begins in preschool and continues through high school.

Figure 1

CASEL has identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies. The definitions of the five competency clusters for students are:

Self-awareness: The ability to accurately *recognize* one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

Self-management: The ability to *regulate* one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.

Social awareness: The ability to *take the perspective of and empathize* with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

Relationship skills: The ability to *establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships* with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.

Responsible decision-making: The ability to *make constructive and respectful choices* about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

The five CASEL competencies reflect intrapersonal and interpersonal domains (National Research Council, 2012). *Self-awareness* and *self-management* are consistent with the intrapersonal domain whereas *social awareness* and *relationship skills* represent dimensions within the interpersonal domain. *Responsible decision-making* is both an individual and social process and therefore represents both domains.

The Importance of SEL for Secondary Students

Recognition of the unique needs of students aged 10-15 began with the advent of the "middle school movement" and continues today (Association for Middle Level Education, 2010). Current best practice guidelines for education at the middle-school level recognize the di-

verse developmental needs of this age group and the importance of promoting both academic and personal development, including social and emotional competence. The importance of SEL for high school is also growing in light of its link to college and career readiness and dropout prevention.

The knowledge, skills, and attitudes within the CASEL five competency clusters are especially relevant during adolescence because youth at this stage are going through rapid physical, emotional, and cognitive changes. These changes create unique opportunities for social and emotional skill development. Adolescents also engage in more risky behavior than younger students and face a variety of challenging situations, including increased independence, peer pressure, and exposure to social media.

Longitudinal studies have shown that increased social and emotional competence is related to reductions in a variety of problem behaviors including aggression, delinquency, substance use, and dropout (Durlak et al., 2011; Sklad et al., 2012; National Research Council, 2012; ACT, 2014).

Learning Environments that Support SEL

Middle schools and high schools can be viewed as systems with multiple levels that influence students' social and emotional development

(Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2000). These levels are shown in Figure 1 on page 5. At the classroom level the quality of teacher-student interactions is one of the most important predictors of student academic performance and adjustment (Hamre & Pianta, 2007; Mashburn & Pianta, 2006). Students who report feeling listened to by teachers, involved in decisions that affect their lives, provided with opportunities to exert autonomy, and accepted by peers are more motivated and perform better in school than those who lack these positive experiences. Interpersonal and organizational factors at the school level also influence students' academic performance and adjustment, in part through their effect on school climate (National School Climate Council, 2007). The quality of the relationships students have with teachers and peers, the clarity and consistency of school rules, and the physical safety of the school are important dimensions of school climate. Students who perceive a positive climate in their school demonstrate higher levels of social competence and report fewer personal problems. Positive school climate in middle and high school is associated with academic achievement, decreased absenteeism, and lower rates of suspension (Thapa et al., 2013). Leadership practices and organizational structures also influence the climate of a school, thereby indirectly influencing student outcomes. In schools characterized by supportive relationships, common goals and norms, and a sense of collaboration, students perform better academically and have fewer behavior problems (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Approaches to Promoting SEL

As shown in Figure 2, schools can help students develop social and emotional competence through several types of approaches. These include (1) infusing SEL in teaching practices to create a learning environment supportive of SEL, (2) infusing SEL instruction into an academic curriculum, (3) creating policies and organizational structures that support students' social and emotional development, and (4) directly teaching SEL skills in free-standing lessons. These approaches are not mutually exclusive. At the middle and high school level SEL programming can happen in the context of regular curriculum and instruction activities, but it can also take place through activities such as health promotion and character education, or through prevention efforts such as those that target violence, substance use, or dropout.

Figure 2

2015 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs—Middle and High School Edition
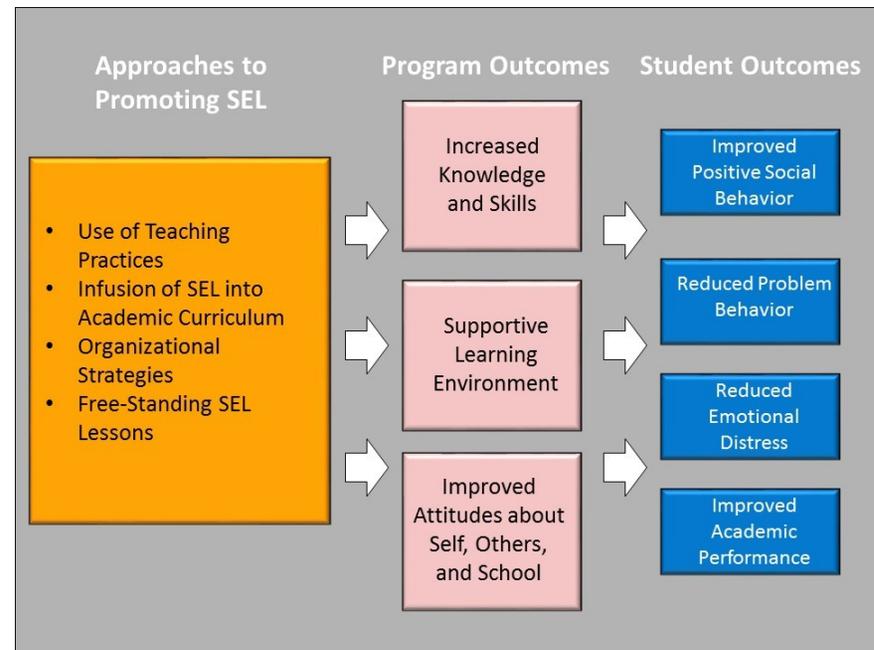
Research on SEL implementation suggests that the most effective strategies include four elements represented by the acronym SAFE: (1) *Sequenced*—connected and coordinated activities to foster skills development; (2) *Active*—active forms of learning to help students master new skills; (3) *Focused*—containing a component that emphasizes developing social and emotional skills; and (4) *Explicit*—targeting specific social and emotional skills (Durlak et al., 2010, 2011).

Interactions with adults and peers are essential for promoting students' social and emotional competence and can take place in multiple settings throughout the school. Research suggests that school-based strategies designed to promote student SEL yield the most successful outcomes when they are embedded into the day-to-day curriculum and connected with other school activities (Greenberg et al., 2003). This is especially important given the fact that in middle and high school students make multiple transitions between classrooms each day. As students acquire knowledge or learn new skills, it is important that they have opportunities to practice and apply the skills in everyday situations and be recognized for using them across a variety of settings. The importance of practice for skill mastery and the influence of adults and peers outside the school on students' development is a reason to coordinate classroom and school efforts with those in family and community settings. Regardless of the

> Adopting an evidence-based SEL program is not enough to ensure positive outcomes. The success of a program depends on high-quality implementation. Poor program implementation can undermine a program's success and its impact on student outcomes.

approach, many SEL programs incorporate schoolwide, i.e., systemic, practices that are designed to promote more positive and supportive relationships among teachers, students, and families and/or practices that facilitate integration and support to extend the impact of social and emotional learning programs beyond the classroom.

Adopting an evidence-based SEL program is not enough to ensure positive outcomes. The success of a program depends on high-quality implementation. Poor program implementation can undermine a program's success and its impact on student outcomes. Initial training is an important strategy associated with high levels of implementation, but research has also demonstrated that ongoing support beyond an initial training (e.g., coaching, follow-up training) enhances both the quality of teaching and student performance. Schoolwide factors also influence the implementation of evidence-based programs. When schools support high-quality program implementation, the impact of evidence-based programs is strengthened (Durlak et al., 2011). Research suggests that administrators can support the effective implementation of SEL programs by setting high expectations and allocating resources for programming. School leaders who model the use of SEL language and practices and endorse the use of SEL practices throughout the school building create a climate in the building that supports SEL.

Outcomes Associated with SEL Programming

Depending on the nature of the approach, SEL programs can lead to three types of program outcomes: (1) promoting knowledge or skills related to the five competency clusters, (2) creating positive learning environments that are safe, caring, engaging, and participatory, and (3) improving student attitudes and beliefs about self, others, and school. Changes in these individual and contextual factors promote improvements in positive social behaviors and peer relationships, reductions in conduct problems, reductions in emotional distress, and improvements in academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011; Durlak et al., 2015; Flemming et al., 2005; Greenberg et al., 2003; Zins et al., 2004).

Research supports this conceptual model and the positive impact SEL can have on school climate, including a host of academic, social, and emotional benefits for students. Durlak, Weissberg et al.'s meta-analysis of 213 rigorous studies of SEL in schools demonstrated that students receiving quality SEL instruction had:

- **Better academic performance**: achievement scores an average of 11 percentile points higher than students who did not receive SEL instruction.
- **Improved attitudes and behaviors**: greater motivation to learn, deeper commitment to school, increased time devoted to schoolwork, and better classroom behavior.
- **Fewer negative behaviors**: decreased disruptive class behavior, noncompliance, aggression, delinquent acts, and disciplinary referrals.

- **Reduced emotional distress**: fewer reports of student depression, anxiety, stress, and social withdrawal.

Programs that include free-standing SEL lessons are often based on the assumption that improvements in knowledge and skills promote positive behavior changes. Programs that focus primarily on changing some aspect of the classroom or school learning environment to improve student outcomes may be more likely to cultivate attitudes rather than skills. Unfortunately, few studies measure all of these factors, and very few have gathered empirical evidence to determine how their impacts were achieved. For this reason, Figure 2 includes arrows linking all of the approaches to all three of the program targets and the student outcomes.

History of CASEL Program Reviews

CASEL shared its first review of SEL programs in 2003 with the publication of *Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs* (CASEL, 2003). In addition to demonstrating how SEL programs contribute to the mission of our nation's schools, the publication summarized the status of outcome research on SEL programs and provided educators with practical information on the features of different programs that could help them select a program both relevant and suited to their particular needs. *Safe and Sound* presented information on 80 different programs and was the most comprehensive research and practical survey of SEL programs available at the time.

CASEL updated its review of evidence-based programs when it re-

leased the *2013 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs—Preschool and Elementary School Edition*. The *2013 Guide* was more developmentally oriented than *Safe and Sound* in focusing on the preschool and elementary grades. It also reflected several advances in the field of SEL. These included a growing evidence base of effective interventions in early childhood; the development of new approaches to fostering academic, social, and emotional learning; and increased interest in going beyond classroom-based implementation of a single SEL program to coordinated, systemic schoolwide and districtwide SEL programming. This *2015 Guide* is a companion to the *2013 Guide*. It provides information similar to the *2013 Guide* but for programs that target students in middle and high school.

In *Safe and Sound* CASEL identified "SELect" programs that met rigorous evaluation and design criteria including comprehensive coverage of the five CASEL SEL competency clusters and positive impacts on student behavioral outcomes. The *2013 CASEL Guide* continued this practice and featured SELect programs only. The *2015 Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs—Middle and High School Edition* creates three categories of programs: *SELect*, *Complementary,* and *Promising*.

Inclusion Criteria & Review Process

To be included in the *2015 Guide* programs have to be universal, that is for use with all students, and be conducted in regular secondary education settings. They must be designed for students in middle or high school (between grades 6 and 12) and be delivered during the school day. Programs are also required to have written documentation of their approach to promoting students' social and emotional development and provide a sufficient level of detail in order to ensure the consistency and quality of program delivery.

SELect Programs

To be designated as SELect, programs have to meet criteria with respect to their (a) overall design, (b) implementation, and (c) research evaluations of program impact described below. These criteria were derived from empirical research and CASEL's model of systemic SEL.

- A program's design must: (a) intentionally and comprehensively promote students' development across the five social and emotional competency clusters, (b) engage students in their own social and emotional development by promoting awareness (e.g., through discussion or reflection) and providing opportunities for practice, and (c) offer programming over multiple years. In terms of implementation, a program must offer training and ongoing support to interested schools or districts.

- In terms of evaluation impact, we require at least one carefully conducted evaluation that (a) includes a comparison group, (b) is based on pre- and post-test measurement, and (c) demonstrates a positive impact on a student behavioral outcome reflected by statistically significant main effects ($p < .05$) between the treatment and comparison groups when controlling for outcome at pretest. Analytic methods must be described with sufficient clarity and not include any serious threats to validity. If a qualifying evaluation includes a program effect that favors the comparison group, then the program is ineligible to be categorized as SELect.

SELect programs are summarized in the tables included in this *Guide*. For each one we have included a program description page in the online version of the *Guide*.

Complementary Programs

Not all SEL programs offer comprehensive programming, but many are aligned with CASEL's conceptual model of SEL. These evidence-based programs include effective strategies and can play an important role in a school's SEL efforts, but they may not be comprehensive enough to serve as the primary SEL program. We classified these programs as "complementary," and we recommend that they be used in combination with other evidence-based programs to create a comprehensive approach.

Complementary programs meet our research criteria, but by definition they do not meet all of the design criteria. A program might be designated complementary for two main reasons:

- If the program does not provide broad coverage of all five competency clusters (e.g., focusing primarily on one cluster or focusing on the personal or social domain only).

- If the program is designed to be implemented in a single school year and does not provide sequenced programming across multiple years.

Programs that teach social and emotional skills in a narrow way (i.e., in the context of one topic such as dating violence or smoking prevention, or without adequate generalization) were excluded.

Promising Programs

Some programs are well-designed and provide comprehensive SEL programming but for various reasons lack adequate research evidence of their effectiveness.

By definition, promising programs meet our design criteria but do not meet the full research criteria. A program might be classified as promising:

- If a qualifying evaluation shows a positive impact favoring the intervention group on a nonbehavioral outcome such as attitudes (e.g., feelings of connectedness to school) or a specific so-

cial or emotional skill (e.g., emotion recognition or decision-making).

- If a qualifying evaluation includes a significant outcome that favors the comparison group on an outcome that is substantively important to the program's theory but the program has an additional qualifying evaluation with an independent sample that demonstrates positive effects.

- If a qualifying evaluation includes a significant outcome that favors the comparison group on an outcome that is substantively important to the program's theory but the program does not have an additional evaluation, then the program is excluded.

Promising programs are eligible to become SELect once an additional study with an independent sample finds effects favoring the intervention group on the same outcome that was previously found to favor the comparison group. *Complementary* and *Promising* programs do not appear in the rating tables but do have program description pages in the online version of this *Guide*.

The Review Process

Search and Call for Programs. In preparation for developing the *2015 Guide*, CASEL cast a broad net and issued a national call for nominations of programs at the middle and high school level. A diverse set of programs from the fields of education, public health, psychology, and prevention science were nominated. At the same time, CASEL conduct-

ed a systematic search of national databases and published reviews to identify school-based programs and approaches for middle and high school populations (i.e., grades 6-12). This process identified 380 programs.

Evaluation Review. We developed a detailed evaluation coding system to review up to two reports the program developer identified as their program's "strongest" evaluation(s) based on criteria we defined. At this stage of the review process 130 programs submitted materials and 90 met our screening criteria. Evaluations were independently reviewed by a team of highly experienced research psychologists and methodologists who then met to resolve discrepancies and come to consensus regarding ratings of the programs' evidence of effectiveness.

Design Review. We worked with practitioners, developmental and educational psychologists, and experts in research and practice to develop an understanding of high-quality education in SEL at the secondary level. Based on the theoretical framework we developed, we created a questionnaire for program providers that asked them to classify and describe their intervention components across classroom and other school settings as well as in family and community domains. For programs that met the full evaluation review and that appeared to meet design criteria based on the questionnaire, we then conducted a full review of each program's design. Program ma-

terials including manuals, student materials, and other resources were reviewed independently by two highly experienced reviewers. The two reviewers then met to reconcile any discrepancies in their ratings and to complete a final consensus summary form for each program. At the end of the process the program providers were given an opportunity to review the setting categories that were identified for each program. When they felt there were gaps or omissions, they were asked to provide additional materials documenting their program's content and practices.

Professional Development and Implementation Supports. The review process also involved an assessment of professional development available to support the implementation of the program. Telephone interviews (typically one hour) that followed a standard protocol were conducted with program representatives.

Rating Framework and Table Description

Three sets of tables in this *Guide* present information about the program design features, training and additional implementation supports, and evidence of effectiveness for each SELect program. Additional detail about each program is also available on a separate program description page included in the online version of the *Guide*.

The middle and high school tables are presented separately. Place-

ment on a table was based on whether a program demonstrated positive effects for middle or high school students. Because of this, programs could be listed on both tables. Further, although some programs included in this *Guide* also provide programming for preschool and elementary students, the current review was limited to the materials used with students at middle and high school.

Each table uses a standard set of symbols to present information and ratings. A check mark (√) indicates whether some elements are present in the program or not. Other elements are rated on a four-point scale in which an empty circle (◯) indicates the element is not present. A quarter circle (◔) indicates minimal coverage of that particular element. A half circle (◑) indicates adequate coverage. And a full circle (●) indicates that the element can be found extensively in the program. Programs are presented in alphabetical order.

Program Design Tables

The program design tables provide information about five topics: (1) the grade range covered by the program, (2) the grades at which the program has documented an impact, (3) the approach used by the program to promote student SEL (categories are not mutually exclusive), (4) the total number of lessons in the program (only relevant to programs that include free-standing SEL lessons), and (5) the extent to which the program includes strategies that promote student SEL in the classroom, school, family, and community settings. Additional details about the design of each program are provided in the program description page in the online version of this *Guide*.

Implementation Support Tables

The implementation support table presents information about four topics: (1) the program training model, (2) the format of the training, (3) the technical assistance and additional supports offered by the program, and (4) whether the program provides a "train the trainer" option.

Evidence of Effectiveness Tables

The evidence of effectiveness tables describe and compare details (including outcomes) of evaluations that met our inclusion criteria for each of the programs and that were coded for this review. Within these tables review findings are presented at two levels: (1) the *Program Level,* i.e., a summary of the evaluation findings from all studies that met our inclusion criteria, and (2) the *Evaluation Level,* i.e., characteristics of each individual evaluation.

The program level of the evidence of effectiveness table presents a summary of findings from each program's qualifying evaluations. Review findings at the program level are presented in three sections: (1) program and evaluation information, (2) study design, and (3) outcomes demonstrating effects. The evaluation level of the evidence of effectiveness tables presents a snapshot of each qualifying evaluation that supported the effectiveness of a program. Review findings at this level are organized into nine columns: (1) *citation*, (2) *study design*, (3) *grades evaluated*, (4) *geographic location*, (5) *race/ethnicity*, (6) *study sample size*, (7) *% reduced lunch*, (8) *post-test effects*, (9) *follow-up effects*.

Program Design Table Elements

Grade Range Covered. This column lists the full range of grade levels the program targets at the middle and high school level.

Grades Evaluated. This column specifies the grade levels of all students included in the program's qualifying evaluation(s).

Approaches to Promoting SEL. This element contains four columns that represent different approaches to promoting SEL. The first three approaches infuse SEL throughout classroom teaching or the broader school environment. The fourth approach involves the use of free-standing lessons. Some programs use more than one approach and may have checks in multiple columns. For this element programs were rated according to whether the particular method was used prominently.

- **Infused in teaching practices.** A program received a check in this column if it focuses on training teachers to use at least two of the four categories of teaching practices included in the classroom setting level. These include specific instructional practices, pedagogies, and classroom management techniques that create a positive classroom climate that supports SEL or teaching practices that promote the generalization of SEL skills by students in applied settings. These teaching practices are designed to engage students actively in learning while also supporting students' social and emotional development.

- **Organizational**. Programs received a check in this column if their approach to SEL significantly reorganizes policies and organizational structures (e.g., leadership teams, advisories, schedules) throughout the school. This approach is equivalent to a school reform model and often requires a strong commitment on the part of schools and a high level of initial and ongoing professional development to be implemented with quality.

- **Free-standing SEL lessons**. Programs received a check in this column if they included directly teaching SEL skills in free-standing lessons. The content of these lessons typically focuses on skills that can be broadly applied to a variety of situations such as making friends, working cooperatively with others, coping with stress, making decisions about potentially risky behaviors, and resolving interpersonal conflicts.

Number of SEL Lessons. For programs that use (and received a check mark for) free-standing SEL lessons (described above under Approaches to Promoting SEL), this column presents the total number of free-standing lessons across the available years of the program.

Settings that Promote and Extend SEL

Classroom. The rating in this column reflects the extent to which each program contains specific strategies that introduce and/or support SEL in the classroom setting including: *classroom-based lessons* that provide direct instruction and practice in SEL; *instructional practices* that create a learning environment that promotes student SEL; *teaching practices to promote positive relationships with and among students*; *shared classroom agreements* that involve all students developing norms or behavioral guidelines to create a positive and orderly classroom experience; *guidelines for how to create SEL lessons* that directly support teachers in developing SEL lessons on their own; *classroom management procedures and strategies* aimed at promoting responsible decision-making and intrinsic motivation to behave respectfully in the classroom. A program that includes free-standing SEL lessons is eligible to receive credit for *SEL generalization* if it provides suggestions for ways in which teachers can reinforce social and emotional development by taking advantage of "teachable moments" beyond the SEL lesson in other curriculum areas.

School. The rating in this column reflects the extent to which programs provide structures and strategies to extend the program throughout the school, including *systemic support for SEL* such as structures to support SEL implementation and *strategies for building a schoolwide sense of community*; *advisory structures*; *systemic integration of SEL and instruction,* which involves embedding program content or practices across multiple subject areas; *cross-age or cross-subjects peer mentoring* to enhance students' sense of connec-

tion to school and to provide academic support; *student support strategies* for working with students at the Tier 2 and Tier 3 level (as described in the Response to Intervention framework).

Family. The rating in this column reflects the extent to which programs have strategies for extending SEL to the family, including: *a family program component* with a manual for leading sessions with parents, or parent self-directed material, such as media; separate *resources for parents*, (e.g., about teens' developmental needs); *suggestions for how to involve parents in supporting student homework* or actual homework assignments that require parental involvement; *strategies for communicating with families* about their children; and *explicit strategies for engaging parents actively in the life of the school,* such as enhancing general school-home communication, as well as encouraging families to come to the school.

Community. The rating in this column reflects the extent to which a program works to promote SEL in students through connections to and *involvement with the broader community*, including suggestions for creating a community advisory board; involving stakeholders in various roles (e.g., arranging outside visitors, soliciting financial support); and connecting students to individuals in the community who are willing to share their expertise or provide students with real-world experiences. *Service-learning* is an important way programs involve students in the community, and in making positive contributions.

Service-learning. Programs with this component implement service-

learning to varying degrees. These range from community-based volunteer work to having guidelines on how to connect SEL skills to real-life applications in service projects. At the highest level service-learning is integrated with academics through academic field work that also contributes to the greater good (e.g., active investigators, applying research tools, and standards of presentation used by professionals in the field).

Implementation Support Table Elements

Recommended Training Model. In this column we describe the program's recommended training model, including information about the total number of days and the length of time required for training. Program providers were encouraged to identify the model that is comprehensive and best conveys all their practices and content even if this is not the most widely adopted model. In many cases this model is not as rigorous as what was used in the evaluation studies that qualified for this review.

Format. This element contains three columns that reflect how the recommended training is offered. Programs are given a check for three different options: (1) *onsite in person*, led by a trainer from the program who comes to the school or district; (2) *onsite virtual*, in which the training is offered at the school or district but involves some form of live interactive webcast/Skyping over the Internet or pre-programmed structured videos accessed through the program's website with special access included in the purchase of the program; (3) *offsite*, in which school personnel travel to an offsite location (e.g., regional training offered to multiple schools/districts or at

the headquarters of the program, a conference at a remote location that also includes a range of trainings, or a conference where the program offers its training as a pre- or post-conference activity). The format options are not mutually exclusive.

Technical Assistance and Implementation Supports. This element describes four major types of technical assistance and other supports that have been shown in research to promote high-quality implementation and sustainability over time.

Administrator support. A check in this column indicates that a component of the recommended training model is designed specifically for school/district administrators and leaders to support them in implementing the program within their school or district.

Coaching. A check in this column refers to a type of feedback provided to teachers and/or administrators by a "coach" who is an expert in implementation, often a staff member or consultant to the program developer. Depending on the program, coaching might involve live or video-based observation of teaching, group discussion of implementation problems, and phone or Web-based consultation on either a regular or as-needed basis.

Professional learning community (PLC). A check in this column indicates that the program provides guidelines or materials to support groups of teachers, staff, and/or administrators/district leaders to meet independently to discuss and problem-solve, learn and share

new skills, and/or network for the purposes of enhancing and sustaining high-quality implementation.

Fidelity measures. A check in this column indicates that the program includes any type of measure (rating scales, observer-based observations, self-report questionnaires, checklists) designed to assess and monitor program implementation.

Train the trainer. A check in this column refers to whether the program provides training for a teacher or designated SEL district educator/mentor designed to teach not only the program content but also how to train others. In turn, this individual becomes the designated school/district "trainer" who then trains the school's/district's teachers and administrators.

Evidence of Effectiveness Table Elements
Program Level
Study Demographics. This element includes two columns that summarize information about the participants across the evaluation(s) that qualified for this review. The *grades evaluated* column reports the grade levels of all students included in the program's qualifying evaluation(s). The *race/ethnicity* column reports the race/ethnicity of the students represented in the program's qualifying evaluation(s) (listed in alphabetical order). Grade level and race/ethnicity groups listed in this table represented at least 10% of the analytic sample (i.e., sample used for analysis).

Study Design. This element presents the methodological design of the evaluation(s) that met our inclusion criteria. It is composed of two columns: *randomized controlled trials (*RCT*)*, meaning schools, classrooms, or students were randomly assigned either to receive the program or to be in a group that did not receive the program (a high standard in research), and *quasi-experimental (QE)*, meaning assignment to the program and the comparison conditions was not random. The total number of each type of evaluation that met criteria for this review is listed in parentheses next to the checkmark.

Outcomes Demonstrating Effects. This element includes six columns. For each program we specify the types of outcomes documented in the qualifying evaluation(s), indicated by a check mark in the respective outcome column. The six categories are *improved academic performance*, *improved positive social behavior*, *reduced problem behaviors*, *reduced emotional distress*, *improved SEL skills and attitudes*, and *improved teaching practices.* Although impact on teaching practices is included as an outcome category in this table, programs were also required to show impact on at least one of the other five student outcomes to be included as a SELect program in this *Guide*.

Evaluation Level
Citation. We provide a citation for each evaluation that supported the effectiveness of the program.

Study Design. We specify whether an evaluation was coded as an RCT or QE, based on the method of group assignment and methodological rigor of the study.

Grades Evaluated. The grade levels of the students who participated in the evaluation and were shown to experience positive effects of the program are reported in this column only if the grade level comprised at least 10% of an evaluation's analytic sample (i.e., sample used for analysis).

Geographic Location. This column reflects whether the evaluation sample was described as "urban," "suburban," "rural," or any combination of the three. An evaluation was coded for a particular geographic location if at least 10% of the students in its analytic sample reported living in that location type.

Race/Ethnicity Evaluated. A race/ethnicity group is listed in this column only if at least 10% of an evaluation's analytic sample reported this as their race/ethnicity. Categories are listed in alphabetical order.

Study Sample Size. We indicate the number of students/participants in the analytic sample for a given evaluation.

% Reduced Lunch. We indicate the percent of an evaluation's analytic sample that qualified for free or reduced lunch, according to federal criteria at the time the study was conducted since many school-based evaluations use this indicator as a proxy for economic disadvantage.

Post-test Effects. We list the categories of outcomes that were shown to be significantly and positively impacted by a program at post-test.

Follow-up Effects. We list the categories of outcomes that were shown to be significantly and positively impacted by a program, as indicated by an assessment conducted after a period of time in which participants did not receive the program and that followed post-test assessment.

Selecting an SEL Program

When school and district planning teams oversee the careful selection and effective implementation of evidence-based social and emotional learning programs, the students they serve benefit socially, emotionally, and academically. This section describes guidelines and steps SEL teams can follow to ensure they ultimately adopt the best programs for their particular school community.

To begin, three key principles support the effective selection, implementation, impact, and sustainability of evidence-based SEL programs.

Principle 1: School and district teams—rather than an individual—should engage diverse stakeholders in the program adoption process to identify shared priorities.

Principle 2: Implementing evidence-based SEL programs within systemic, ongoing district and school planning, programming, and evaluation leads to better practice and more positive outcomes for students.

Principle 3: It is critical to consider local contextual factors (e.g., student characteristics, programs already in place) when using the *CASEL*

Guide and gathering additional information in order to make the most effective decisions about which programs to implement.

Some schools may prefer to develop their own approach to SEL, rather than adopting one of the evidence-based SELect programs identified in this *Guide*. We believe it is better to start from a foundation that is evidence-based. A SELect program can serve as a base from which to coordinate school-wide SEL, school-family partnerships, and community programming. The benefits of using programs that embody years of scientific program development, evaluation, and evidence are worth the effort.

Within the context of the three principles above, we have organized the following steps for selecting an evidence-based program based on research and practice.

Step 1: Use the SELect tables to identify program candidates.
Step 2: Review the program descriptions of each of the possible candidates you identify to narrow your search.

> If you want to use a program that has free-standing lessons for SEL, it will be necessary to identify a few times per week when this can happen. If instead your staff wants to develop greater expertise in providing pedagogies that develop SEL, you will want to pay particular attention to programs that infuse SEL in teaching practices.

Step 3: Gather additional information about your top program candidates.

Step 4: Assess the cultural sensitivity and linguistic responsiveness of the program.

Step 5: Contact and visit schools using the program(s) you are considering.

Step 6: Completing the selection process and beyond.

Step 1. Use the SELect tables to identify program candidates.

The 2015 *Guide* presents SELect middle school and high school programs separately. Review the ratings on the three tables ("Program Design" "Implementation Support," and "Evidence of Effectiveness") that correspond to the grade levels for which you want to select a program. The online version of this *Guide* provides a link at the top right of each table to learn more about what the ratings mean and how to interpret them.

As you scan the list of programs, look first to see if you recognize any programs that are already being implemented in your school or district. If the program your school or district is using is a SELect program, well-received by your school community, and beneficial for students, you will be ahead of the game. On the other hand, many schools or districts currently implement programs that CASEL has not identified as SELect. If this is the case in your school or district, it's a cause for reflection but not necessarily for concern. We have also identified complementary programs that can help support a broad plan for SEL. A program you are familiar with may not be listed as SELect or Complementary for a variety of reasons. One possibility is that we have not yet reviewed it.

If your school or district has programs that are not on either list, we recommend several courses of action. First, align your program to the CASEL SELect criteria so you have a better sense of whether it appears to be well-designed, offers adequate training and support, and provides evidence of its impact and effectiveness. Second, contact the program provider to get a direct report on the extent to which the program meets our criteria. Third, please contact CASEL to inform us about the program. We will continually update the *Guide*, and we want to be sure we are reviewing all the programs schools may be thinking about.

When using the program design table, here are some considerations to guide your discussions and decisions about program adoption:

Grade range covered. Some teams will prefer to select programs that cover every grade level their school serves so the school community aligns around a unified framework and set of activities. Other teams may believe they already have certain grades covered effectively. In these instances it will be important to determine how newly adopted programs can best be coordinated with programs that are already in place.

Approaches to promote SEL. If you want to use a program that has free-standing lessons for SEL, it will be necessary to identify a few times per week when this can happen. If instead your staff wants to develop greater expertise in providing pedagogies that develop SEL, you will want to pay particular attention to programs that infuse SEL in teaching practices. Other schools and school systems may have

curriculum areas where SEL could be integrated. If so, you will want to look for programs that are infused in an academic curriculum. Finally, if you want to infuse SEL systemically, you will want to pay careful attention to programs that provide structures and guidance for doing that.

Number of SEL lessons. Programs that provide free-standing lessons assume that schools can devote a certain amount of class time to the process. If your school is looking for a program that provides free-standing instruction in SEL, we encourage teams to review some programs that require fewer versus more lessons to gain a sense of how different models operate.

Settings (that promote and reinforce SEL). SEL is more powerful when it is reinforced across all the settings where students spend their time. Schools and districts wishing to implement systemic SEL programming may choose to adopt programs that provide guidance and strategies for classroomwide, schoolwide, and family programming. Other teams may prefer to begin with a more narrowly focused classroom program.

When using the implementation support table, here are some factors to consider as your team reviews program.

Recommended training model. Consider whether the recommended training model would provide your teachers and staff with sufficient training and support, and whether it is feasible.

Format. Given the context of your school or district, consider whether the available formats for training would meet your needs. If not, you may want to discuss with program providers whether they have other ways of accommodating your school or district.

Technical assistance and implementation supports. Does each program you are considering provide administrative supports, ongoing coaching, and opportunities to participate in professional learning communities? Does each program provide tools for monitoring implementation that are specifically aligned with the program and that will allow you to collect information to enhance the quality of implementation?

Train the trainer. In terms of ultimately sustaining the approach to SEL you choose to adopt, you may be interested in knowing whether the program offers a train the trainer model.

As you look at the evidence of effectiveness table, consider the following:

Study demographics. When judging the strength of the research base

for particular programs, consider whether they have been evaluated with samples that are similar to the students in your school. Research has indicated that SEL programs do not seem to have better effects for some student subgroups over others (Durlak et al., 2011). If you are considering a program and the populations evaluated do not match your student population, it may still be worth considering.

Study design. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) are generally more rigorous than quasi-experimental designs. It is likely that programs with more studies and more RCTs have stronger research foundations.

Outcomes demonstrating effects. Many SELect programs at the secondary level have documented beneficial effects on students' problem behaviors. Assessments of program effects on academic performance, positive social behavior, or emotional distress are less common. Many programs also show effects on SEL skills and attitudes. You may also be interested in knowing that a program was shown to have effects on teaching practices. Yet most program evaluations do not systematically collect data across all of these domains. If a program does not report gains in a particular area, it may be that their evaluation did not examine that area.

Step 2. Review program descriptions to narrow your search.

Use the program descriptions (in the online version of this *Guide)* to learn more about the specific programs that interest you. These descriptions provide detailed information about each program including the full range of grade levels for which the program is designed and the skills the program teaches. The summaries include an overview of each program followed by a grid with the findings in Tables 1 to 6. Also included in the online version of this *Guide* is a link to the program's own website, where you will be able to find additional information.

Because social and emotional competence is ultimately dependent on one's culture, the cultural relevance of SEL programs is an important factor to consider. Although all the programs we reviewed made efforts to respect different cultures, we note in the program description if a program made specific efforts to adapt to particular cultural contexts, or if there is content within the program to help teachers implement or adapt activities based on the cultures or linguistic needs of their students.

Based on your review of the descriptions of the top candidates, you should narrow your search to three or four programs you will explore more deeply.

Step 3. Gather additional information about your top program candidates.

Once your team has settled on three or four programs that appear to meet your needs and support the goals of your SEL plan, you will need to explore these programs more deeply and gather information related to your particular situation. Consider contacting the program provider at this point. Key issues to discuss include program costs, training and other implementation supports such as on-site coaching and consultation, available guidance and tools for monitoring implementation and

evaluating student outcomes, and the extent to which the program is culturally and linguistically appropriate for your student population. Following are questions you may want to ask in exploring each of these issues.

Program costs. Some programs separate costs for training and costs for materials. Others combine these costs. Costs will also depend on unique circumstances in your district, such as whether the district has the capacity to support training of trainers and how much training in SEL your staff has already experienced. Questions to determine what the cost would be in your school or district include:

- What is the cost of standard program materials? Are there recurring costs? Are there ways to save on costs?
- What is the cost of training in our situation? Are there ways of saving on the cost of training?
- Is there training for trainers or training for coaches? If so, what is the cost?
- What are the differences in cost based on location of training?

Training and support for implementation. Initial training in implementing a particular SEL program is essential. Ongoing training and support is highly desirable. Questions to ask with regard to training include:

- How much training will our staff need? How much time is required? Who should attend the training?
- Are there any prerequisites for participating in training?

- Does the training include opportunities to practice using classroom materials and receive feedback? To develop a plan with colleagues for implementing the program? To use strategies such as morning meetings to establish a supportive classroom learning environment?
- After the initial staff development workshop and a period of implementation, does the program offer on-site consultation to schools to observe teachers using the program and offer feedback, facilitate group discussions about the program, and/or facilitate teachers coaching one another?

Continuing evaluation of the program. A process for regularly evaluating the program's impact on students should be in place from the beginning. Question to ask include:

- Does the program provide school districts with on-site assistance in designing an evaluation to determine the program's impact on students?
- Does the program provide on-site assistance in collecting and analyzing evaluation data?
- Does the program provide assistance in interpreting evaluation data and making appropriate recommendations?

Review materials. No program should be adopted without a careful review of the materials. Most of the SEL program providers will allow schools to preview materials free of charge and will send sample lessons. Questions to ask include:

- Are program materials available for review?

- How long can we keep the materials if we receive them in the mail?
- Is there a cost for review materials?
- How much of the program and its materials can be viewed directly on the program developer's website?

Information about others who have experience with the program.
Interacting with other districts and schools that have experience with the program, preferably in person, is highly desirable. Many programs will provide potential adopters with a list of schools or districts in their region that have used the program. Ideally the schools or districts you contact will be similar to your own in terms of size and student population and located close enough so you can visit and observe the program being implemented. Questions to ask include:

- Can colleagues who are using the program be contacted directly?
- Is it possible to see the program in action?

Step 4. Assess the cultural sensitivity and linguistic responsiveness of the program.
Research in social and emotional learning, and in child and adolescent development more broadly, has consistently found that young people learn best when education is relevant and appropriate to their cultural and linguistic context. The same is true with regard to materials and programming for families and caregivers. This creates
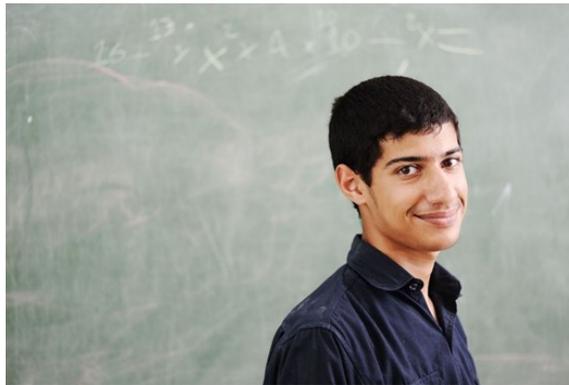
special challenges when selecting programs, since many schools are multicultural, with unique combinations of different cultures and with different levels of acculturation.

In our review of SEL programs we have paid careful attention to whether and how programs have made adjustments for different cultural contexts. For example, when programs indicate that they are designed for use with particular ethnic/cultural groups, or if they suggest how content or activities can be adapted for use with different groups, we note this in our comments in the program description (in the online version of this *Guide*). As part of our review of evaluations we note which geographic and ethnic/cultural groups were represented in the study samples for each program.

Your colleagues, parents, and students are the experts on the cultures and languages represented in your school or district. Questions you will want to ask related to a program's cultural and linguistic appropriateness include:

- How does the program ensure that the language, content, and activities are appropriate for the kind of community where participating schools are located?
- Has the program been evaluated with populations similar to the one in our school?
- Are there program evaluations that might provide additional infor-

mation about the cultural and linguistic appropriateness of this program for different groups of students?

- Are there schools using the program in communities similar to ours in terms of culture and languages? Can the program provider identify contacts in those schools?

To further help you select a program that meets your community's needs, we also recommend:

- As you identify possible candidates from the CASEL SELect list, consider our comments about cultural and linguistic sensitivity in the descriptions of each program's design, when available. In addition, review the evaluation table to determine whether programs have been evaluated in settings with a similar population to the one in your school.
- Think about the community where your school is located. What cultures and ethnicities are represented among the students and their families? What languages are spoken by families served by your school? How will you make decisions about SEL programs in a way that honors and celebrates different cultures and contexts in which your students live and learn? Who are the people in your school community who can help you in this process?
- Assemble a subcommittee or team made up of parents, faculty, and community stakeholders who represent the cultural perspectives in your community. Ask them to help you review and explore programs you are considering.

> Social and emotional learning can serve as an organizing principle for coordinating all of a school's academic, youth development, and prevention activities.

Step 5. Contact and visit schools using the program.

To complete the selection process, contact and visit one or more schools using the programs you are considering. Speak with teachers and others who have experience with the program. Observe how the program works in action. Most programs can identify individuals or schools for a visit. At a minimum, and if distance and travel are problems, try to arrange extended telephone interviews with others who have used the program. If you are able to arrange visits, prepare carefully with a set of questions and discussion topics. With all the information you gather, your team will be well-equipped to complete the selection of a SELect program to support your SEL plan.

Step 6: Completing the selection process and beyond.

Once you have selected a program, there's work to do to ensure the program is well-implemented. As part of planning, you will need to develop strategies for supporting implementation. Your committee should explore at least three kinds of on-site support: observation and feedback to teachers by program staff, meetings where teachers can discuss challenges and successes with colleagues who are more experienced with the program, and peer coaching by experienced teachers. Your school may also want to consider relatively new approaches to professional

development such as incorporating the program into the school's daily routines. Teachers might be given time to meet with one another and reflect on how things are going. Ideally, you will be able to use self-assessment tools provided by the program that can assist with this type of reflection.

Your team should also develop a plan for monitoring progress and impact by using implementation and student outcome data. Although there is strong evidence suggesting SEL programs can improve students' behavior and academic performance, it is always important to monitor a program's effects in each local context. Meeting regularly to discuss and identify challenges to overcome and successes to celebrate should be an important priority.

Once you have selected the program, you will also need to develop a plan for first-year implementation. It may make sense to start with a modest effort and build on solid success. For example, you might decide to pilot a program in one school, or in several grades in several schools. You will also need to develop strategies for supporting implementation. Going forward it will be important to continue to evaluate and assess whether the selected program is well-received and also achieves its goals in promoting SEL in students.

Systemic SEL

CASEL advocates the use of evidence-based SEL programs within the context of a systemic approach at both the school and district level. Based on strong scientific evidence about the impact of social and emotional factors on students' academic learning and school success, CASEL believes that developing the capacity to support high-quality, evidence-based SEL must be an essential part of districts' improvement efforts.

Social and emotional learning can serve as an organizing principle for coordinating all of a school's academic, youth development, and prevention activities. It provides a common language and coordinating framework for communicating not just about SEL but about a wide range of programs and teaching approaches that schools normally provide. When systemic social, emotional, and academic learning becomes the overarching framework for a school or district, the result is an organization whose integrated programming activities are greater than the sum of its parts.

Conclusions & Future Directions

SEL-related Approaches

Several current innovative perspectives on educational practice are aligned with SEL or create opportunities for SEL.

College and Career Readiness. The transition to high school is an important developmental milestone of adolescence. Although efforts to promote college and career readiness begin in the middle grades, they are prominent at the high school level, where the pressures to increase high school graduation levels, rates of post-secondary education completion, and workplace readiness are greater. Several recent publications on college and career readiness, deeper learning, and 21st-century skills cite social and emotional skills as central to success (ACT, 2014; National Research Council, 2012). An emerging educational trend is the movement toward restructuring high schools into career and interest-themed "academies." These smaller learning communities allow students to get to know their teachers and peers as individuals and help them feel more connected to the school. The academy structure increases student motivation because it aligns learning with students' personal interests. This approach can create meaningful learning experiences that provide students with technical knowledge and that teach them the academic and social-emotional skills they need to be successful in college, career, and life. Career

> These smaller learning communities allow students to get to know their teachers and peers as individuals and help them feel more connected to the school.

academies often create active links to businesses in the community, and this has been an effective way to facilitate genuine school-community partnerships.

Mindfulness. A growing movement in education today is to promote mindful or contemplative awareness in students as well as teachers. Mindfulness has been defined as "…a way of paying attention that is intentional, trained on the present moment, and maintained with an attitude of non-judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 1994 as cited in Broderick & Metz, p. 37). School-based programs that promote mindful awareness in students often include yoga, breathing, brief meditations, and other strategies designed to help students focus attention and regulate emotions. The research on universal contemplative education programs to support students' mindful awareness is at an early stage (Greenberg & Harris, 2011), although there is some preliminary evidence suggesting that school-based approaches to promote mindful awareness in students may have promise. Nevertheless, important research questions are as yet unanswered, including (1) the developmental appropriateness of strategies at different ages, (2) the needed intensity and duration necessary to improve student functioning, and (3) whether there is a lasting effect at least one or two years following these interventions. Given the early state of progress of research and practice in this area and the fact that the skills

and attitudes promoted through mindful awareness practices are not currently included in the definition of the CASEL five competency clusters, these programs are best seen as supplements to SEL programs that may have the potential to facilitate SEL.

In the process of conducting our review, four programs (.b, Kripalu Yoga, Learning to Breathe, and Transformative Life Skills) designed to promote mindful awareness met CASEL's research criteria.

Student-Centered Practices. A recent trend in education to improve a range of academic outcomes including achievement, graduation, and college and career readiness is the use of student-centered practices. Several of the SELect high school programs included in this *Guide* include student-centered practices. This approach is appropriate for all students but is considered essential to address the opportunity gap created by No Child Left Behind for students of color living in under-resourced communities (Darling-Hammond, Friedlaender, & Snyder, 2014; Friedlaender, Burns, Lewis-Charp, Cook-Harvey, & Darling-Hammond, 2014). Student-centered practices include rich and relevant curricula, teaching that promotes deeper learning, authentic assessments that inform practice, and personalized learning that includes instructional supports (Darling-Hammond et al., 2014). Given the fact that human relationships are at the core of student-centered practices, they have

the potential to create more positive classroom and school climates that facilitate SEL. Both career academies and "small schools" use student-centered practices to personalize education and support students' needs. The small school approach to secondary school reform involves restructuring large schools, often high schools, into smaller schools in an effort to increase students' feeling of connectedness to school and the staff's ability to meet the individual needs of students (Allen & Steinberg, 2005). The research regarding the effectiveness of this approach is mixed, but results of a recent evaluation are positive (Bloom & Unterman, 2012).

Early Warning Systems. Longitudinal studies have shown that social and emotional competence is related to reductions in a variety of problem behaviors including aggression, delinquency, and substance use. Many different risk behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying, and dropout) can be prevented or reduced when interventions promote students' social and emotional development. Schools are developing early warning systems based on this research. When identifying potential indicators, it is important to consider students who are resilient and thrive developmentally despite being exposed to risk factors. Social-emotional competence is relevant to individual resilience. Assessments of student social and emotional competence may offer a positive indicator that has the potential to create more balanced systems to identify whether students are on track to graduate or at risk for dropout.

Technology. Since the advent of the Internet, the use of online learning has been expanding rapidly, and the trend toward using this technology is growing in K-12 school systems. Empirical studies of this educational approach are limited. Findings from meta-analyses on the effectiveness of online learning practices suggest that outcomes for online education and face-to-face education are comparable (Cavanaugh 2001; Bernard et al., 2004). This research has implications for SEL that may be enhanced by the wise use of technology. For example, the Internet can deliver up-to-date and accurate communication to a worldwide audience and thus help in the dissemination and adoption of SEL programs. Webinars can bring various stakeholders together and foster the development of coalitions among like-minded groups that can drive powerful grass-roots initiatives. Interactive video conferencing has the potential to reduce the cost of implementation training and delivering ongoing support. Indeed, several of the SELect programs included in this *Guide* incorporate some use of online training. Schools are using Web-based software to collect ongoing data about student functioning or program implementation with the goal of providing feedback for continuous improvement. Computer-based applications and the use of smartphones can support real-time assessments that can aid in both implementation and program evaluation efforts. As new technological innovations appear, so will ideas about how they can be used most effectively in SEL programming.

Summary of Lessons Learned

Research on SEL has made significant advances in the past decade, and, as this *Guide* demonstrates, there is a growing evidence base for SEL programming at the middle and high school levels. However, more work is needed to ensure districts and schools will be able to implement the most effective programs. This is particularly true at the secondary level. Below we summarize important findings from this *2015 CASEL Guide* regarding the research, design, and implementation supports of the SELect programs and the implications of these findings for future research and practice with adolescents.

Study Design. Using strong evidence-based programs is critically important in fostering students' social and emotional development. Although this *Guide* includes data from both quasi-experimental studies and randomized controlled trials (RCTs), findings from RCTs are generally considered more reliable because their design is more rigorous. At the middle school level five of the six SELect programs were evaluated with at least one RCT. At the high school level three out of five were evaluated using that design. It is important for programs to demonstrate positive effects in more than one study with an independent sample. Only a small number of the SELect programs have replications (five out of nine programs). The outcomes across these studies were generally consistent with one another, which lends confidence to the validity of the findings.

One goal for the future is that SELect programs not only have multiple evaluations, but that these evaluations be conducted by independent research teams. Another way to improve the SEL program evidence base is to have more studies follow participants over time and demonstrate the sustainability of their impacts. Only two of the SELect programs showed positive program effects at a time after post-test. Educational researchers interested in noncognitive factors have noted that longitudinal research is important to determine how skills in nonacademic domains are related to academic performance (Farrington et al., 2012).

Assessment of Outcomes. Across the SELect programs many evaluations demonstrated beneficial effects on students. These included improvements in social and emotional competence, reductions in problem behavior, and improved academic performance. Interestingly, the positive effects of SELect programs on academic performance were most evident at the high school level, where all five programs showed positive effects on this outcome. At the middle school level only two of the six programs documented this effect. Given the current climate of accountability in educational settings and the priorities of federal funding agencies, researchers should assess academic outcomes in future evaluations of SEL programs. Overall the program outcomes at the middle school level were more diverse than those at the high school level. Several of the programs impacted several of the four behavior domains at the middle school level, whereas at the high school level only one of the SELect programs had a positive impact on a non-academic outcome.

Student Populations. For some SELect programs the grade levels of the sample in the evaluation studies were not representative of the full grade range of students covered by the program. In the future researchers should take this into consideration when designing studies and making choices about which students should participate.

SEL Approaches. SEL programs at the elementary level have traditionally used free-standing SEL lessons to teach social and emotional skills explicitly. In terms of SELect programs, this approach was still practiced at the middle school level, with four out of the six programs taking this approach, but only one of the SELect programs at the high school level utilized this method. Although the use of free-standing lessons requires time in the academic schedule, structures like advisories provide an ideal setting in which to embed SEL program content. An important contribution of this review and the resulting *Guide* has been to expand perspectives on evidence-based approaches that promote SEL. One common SEL approach at both developmental levels was to use specific teaching practices to create classroom environments that foster social and emotional learning. Another is to integrate SEL instruction into an academic subject. This approach was found at both the middle and high school level, and in all cases programs that took this approach also placed a heavy emphasis on teaching practices. At the high school level three programs focused exclusively on teaching practices without any curricular content. One important focus of future research should be to investigate the unique contribution of each of the different SEL approaches to improving student outcomes and whether it is possible to have stronger impacts when multiple approaches are used together (Domitrovich et al., 2009).

Systemic SEL. Social and emotional learning is more powerful when it is reinforced in all the contexts that affect young people's learning and development (Greenberg et al., 2003). It was common for SELect programs at the middle and high school levels to include strategies at the classroom and school level but less common for programs to include family components or programming that linked students to the community. Future research should clarify the independent and combined effects of classroom, schoolwide, and family- and community-oriented SEL programming.

Implementation Quality. The quality of SEL program implementation is greatly influenced by how prepared schools are when they adopt an SEL program, the process through which programs are chosen, and the extent to which all staff members are involved in that decision. Once a program is adopted, training and ongoing support become the critical factors for program success because of the impact these factors have on the quality of program implementation. All programs in the *Guide* had to provide training and ongoing support. Interestingly, all but one of the SELect programs provide coaching to practitioners and seven have some materials or structures to support the creation of a professional learning community. Several of the programs (six out of nine) offer specific training to members of the school administration to support implementation by school staff, and all but one of the programs provide some measures of program fidelity that practitioners could use to monitor implementation. Although we know much more now about effective implementation procedures than we did a decade ago, more research is needed to provide schools with the information and tools to implement evidence-

based programs successfully. Cost-effective and efficient models of professional development and program evaluations are also needed in order to validate that they produce student outcomes as strong as those that use intensive models of support (Durlak et al., 2015).

The Future of Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning facilitates students' intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive skills and prepares them to meet the challenges they will inevitably face in today's world. As a result of the expanding research base, SEL should now be considered a scientifically established, practical method that can improve the social, emotional, and academic performance of middle and high school students throughout the country. It deserves a prominent place in the education of all children.

In the earlier days of SEL, programs were usually started in only a few schools to test their impact. Knowing, as we do now, that several different types of SEL initiatives can be successful on a small-scale basis, we need information on how SEL programming can be incorporated systemically on a districtwide basis to offer comprehensive services simultaneously to multiple schools and student bodies. Our hope and expectation is that CASEL's Collaborating Districts Initiative, currently operating in eight large urban school districts across the country, along with similar efforts elsewhere, will yield useful information on how to take SEL programming successfully to scale.

On the policy front, several state boards of education have developed preschool to grade 12 learning standards related to SEL that may even-

tually become part of everyday educational practice (Dusenbury et al., 2011). These standards should motivate more schools to integrate social and emotional learning into practice. At the federal level opportunities to promote SEL nationwide are offered by the pending Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2015 and in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Our hope is that researchers and educators will work closely together to advance evidence-based SEL practice. Each has much to offer the other. For example, researchers can continue to clarify the short- and long-term benefits of SEL programs, reasons why programs produce their desired outcomes, and the parameters associated with maximum program impact for different student populations. At the same time, school staff who administer programs and consultants who offer implementation supports can discover ways to adapt programs effectively for different situations and identify training methods that are most helpful to practitioners. These developments should, in turn, shape better research studies.

The current status of school-based SEL programming is bright. If recent developments in research, practice, and policy are any indication, the future is even brighter. We at CASEL will continue to stay informed about the central SEL issues in the context of shifting education priorities and actively communicate our findings.

Effective SEL Programs for Middle School

Program Design: The program design tables provide information about five topics: (1) the grade range covered by the program, (2) the grades at which the program has documented an impact, (3) the approach used by the program to promote student SEL (categories are not mutually exclusive), (4) the total number of lessons in the program (only relevant to programs that include free-standing SEL lessons), and (5) the extent to which the program included strategies that promote student SEL in the classroom, school, family, and community settings. Additional details about the design of each program are provided in the program description pages in the online version of this *Guide.*

Table 1. Program Design for Middle School

Program Name	Grade Range Covered	Grades Evaluated	Approaches to Promote SEL				Number of SEL Lessons	Settings			
			Teaching Practices	In Academic Curriculum	Organizational	Free-Standing SEL Lessons		Classroom	School	Family	Community
Expeditionary Learning	6th -12th	6th - 8th	√	√ Language Arts	√		N/A	● full	● full	● full	● full
Facing History and Ourselves	6th -12th	7th - 10th	√	√ Social Studies			N/A	● full	● full	◔ quarter	◐ half
Lions Quest, Skills for Adolescence	6th - 8th	6th, 7th				√	108	◐ half	◔ quarter	● full	● full
Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways	6th - 8th	6th				√	48	◐ half	○ empty	○ empty	○ empty
Second Step: Student Success Through Prevention for Middle School	6th - 8th	6th				√	40	◐ half	◔ quarter	◔ quarter	○ empty
Student Success Skills	6th – 12th	7th, 9th, 10th	√			√	8	● full	◔ quarter	◐ half	○ empty

Effective SEL Programs for Middle School

Implementation Support: The implementation support tables present information about four topics: (1) the program training model, (2) the format of the training, (3) the technical assistance and additional supports offered by the program, and (4) whether the program provides a "train the trainer" option.

Table 2. Implementation Support for Middle School

Program Name	Recommended Training Model	Format			Technical Assistance & Impl. Supports				Train the Trainer
		Onsite in-person	Onsite Virtual	Off-site	Admin. Support	Coaching	PLC	Fidelity Measures	
Expeditionary Learning	Schoolwide focus: 2-3 summer weeks plus total of 30-40 days onsite and same offsite.	√		√	√	√	√	√	
Facing History and Ourselves	2-5 days	√	√	√		√	√	√	
Lions Quest, Skills for Adolescence	days	√		√	√	√	√		√
Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways	3 days	√		√	√				√
Second Step: Student Success Through Prevention for Middle School	4 modules -- 30-60 min /each.		√		√		√	√	
Student Success Skills	1 day	√		√		√		√	√

Effective SEL Programs for Middle School

Evidence of Effectiveness. The evidence of effectiveness tables describe and compare details of evaluations that met our inclusion criteria for each of the programs and that were coded for this review. Within these tables review findings are presented at two levels: (1) the Program Level, i.e., a summary of the evaluation findings from all studies that met our inclusion criteria, and (2) the Evaluation Level, i.e., characteristics of each individual evaluation. At both levels details are provided regarding the participants and the outcomes demonstrating program effects (e.g., student behavior, students' academic performance, and teacher behavior).

Go to the next page to view Table 3: Evidence of Effectiveness for Middle School.

Program Name & Citation	Study Design	Study Demographics					Outcomes Demonstrating Effects						Follow-Up Effects
		Grades Evaluated	Geographic Location	Race/ Ethnicity	Study Sample Size	% Reduced Lunch	Improved Academic Performance	Improved Positive Soc. Behavior	Reduced Problem Behaviors	Reduced Emotional Distress	Improved SEL Skills & Attitudes	Improved Teaching Practices	
Expeditionary Learning													
Nichols-Barrer & Haimson (2013)	QE	6th-8th	Urban	Black, Hispanic	3016	71%	√						None
Facing History and Ourselves													
Domitrovich, C.E., Syvertsen, A., Cleveland, M., Moore, J.E., Jacobson, L., Harris, A., Glenn, J., & Greenberg, M.T. (2014)	RCT	7th, 8th	Urban Pennsyl-vania	Black, Hispanic, Multi-Racial	496	Not Reported		√	√		√		None
Lions Quest, Skills for Adolescence													
Eisen, M., Zellman, G. L., & Murray, D. M. (2003)	RCT	7th	Urban, Suburban	Black, Hispanic	5610	Not Reported			√		√		Reduced Problem Behaviors, Improved SEL Skills & Attitudes (91 Weeks)
Malmin, G. (2007)	QE	6th, 7th	Urban, Rural	Not reported	716	Not Reported					√		None
Responding In Peaceful and Positive Ways													
Farrell, A. D., Meyer, A. L., & White, K. S. (2001)	RCT	6th	Richmond, Virginia	Black	474	Not Reported			√				None
Farrell, A. D., Valois, R. F., & Meyer, A. L. (2002)	QE	6th	Rural Florida	Hispanic, White	161	Not Reported			√				None
Farrell, A. D., Valois, R. F., Meyer, A. L., & Tidwell, R. P. (2003)	QE	6th, 7th	Rural Florida	Black, Hispanic, White	1340	65.4%			√		√		Reduced Emotional Distress (4 months)
***Second Step: Student Success Through Prevention* for Middle School**													
Espelage, D. L., Low, S., Polanin, J. R., & Brown, E. C. (2013)	RCT	6th	Illinois, Kansas	Black, Hispanic, Multi-Racial, White	3616	74.1%			√				None
Student Success Skills													
Lemberger, M. E., Selig, J. P., Bowers, H., & Rogers, J. E. (2015)	RCT	7th	Rural	Hispanic, White	193	81%	√				√		None

Effective SEL Programs for High School

Program Design: The program design tables provide information about five topics: (1) the grade range covered by the program, (2) the grades at which the program has documented an impact, (3) the approach used by the program to promote student SEL (categories are not mutually exclusive), (4) the total number of lessons in the program (only relevant to programs that include free-standing SEL lessons), and (5) the extent to which the program included strategies that promote student SEL in the classroom, school, family, and community settings. Additional details about the design of each program are provided in the program description pages in the online version of this *Guide.*

Table 4. Program Design for High School

Program Name	Grade Range Covered	Grades Evaluated	Approaches to Promote SEL				Number of SEL Lessons	Settings			
			Teaching Practices	In Academic Curriculum	Organizational	Free-Standing SEL Lessons		Classroom	School	Family	Community
Consistency Management & Cooperative Discipline®	6th -12th	9th	√				N/A	● (full)	◕ (three-quarter)	◑ (half)	○ (empty)
Facing History and Ourselves	6th -12th	7th - 10th	√	√ Social Studies			N/A	● (full)	● (full)	◕ (three-quarter)	◑ (half)
Project Based Learning by Buck Institute for Education	6th -12th	12th	√				N/A	◑ (half)	◑ (half)	◑ (half)	● (full)
Reading Apprenticeship	6th -12th	9th, 11th	√	√ Reading, Social Studies, Science			N/A	● (full)	◕ (three-quarter)	○ (empty)	○ (empty)
Student Success Skills	6th – 12th	7th, 9th, 10th	√			√	8	◑ (half)	◕ (three-quarter)	◑ (half)	○ (empty)

Effective SEL Programs for High School

Implementation Support: The implementation support tables present information about four topics: (1) the program training model, (2) the format of the training, (3) the technical assistance and additional supports offered by the program, and (4) whether the program provides a "train the trainer" option.

Table 5. Implementation Support for High School

Program Name	Recommended Training Model	Format			Technical Assistance & Impl. Supports				Train the Trainer
		Onsite in-person	Onsite Virtual	Off-site	Admin. Support	Coaching	PLC	Fidelity Measures	
Consistency Management & Cooperative Discipline®	1 summer day plus six 90-min workshops over academic year.	√			√	√	√	√	√
Facing History and Ourselves	2-5 days	√	√	√		√	√	√	
Project Based Learning by Buck Institute for Education	Core package: 3 days plus 2 f/u coaching days.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Reading Apprenticeship	7-10 days over 12-14 months.	√		√	√	√	√	√	
Student Success Skills	1 day	√		√		√		√	√

Effective SEL Programs for High School

Evidence of Effectiveness. The evidence of effectiveness tables describe and compare details of evaluations that met our inclusion criteria for each of the programs and that were coded for this review. Within these tables review findings are presented at two levels: (1) the Program Level, i.e., a summary of the evaluation findings from all studies that met our inclusion criteria, and (2) the Evaluation Level, i.e., characteristics of each individual evaluation. At both levels details are provided regarding the participants and the outcomes demonstrating program effects (e.g., student behavior, students' academic performance, and teacher behavior).

Go to the next page to view Table 6: Evidence of Effectiveness for High School.

Program Name & Citation	Study Design	Study Demographics					Outcomes Demonstrating Effects						Follow-Up Effects
		Grades Evaluated	Geographic Location	Race/ Ethnicity	Study Sample Size	% Reduced Lunch	Improved Academic Performance	Improved Positive Soc. Behavior	Reduced Problem Behaviors	Reduced Emotional Distress	Improved SEL Skills & Attitudes	Improved Teaching Practices	
Project Based Learning by Buck Institute for Education													
Finkelstein, N., Hanson, T., Huang, C., Hirschman, B., and Huang, M. (2010)	RCT	12th	Rural, Urban	Hispanic, White	3752	39%	√						None
Consistency Management & Cooperative Discipline®													
Freiberg, J. H., Husinec, C. A., Rubino, C., Johnson, J., Borders, K., Williams, L., & Alexander, R. (2011)	QE	9th	Urban	Black, Hispanic	344	85.6%	√						None
Facing History and Ourselves													
Barr, D.J., Boulay, B., Selman, R.L., McCormick, R., Lowenstein, E., Gamse, B., Fine, M., and Leonard, M.B. (2015)	RCT	9th, 10th	Urban	Asian, Black, Hispanic, White	1371	Not Reported	√				√	√	None
Reading Apprenticeship													
Greenleaf, C., Hanson, T., Herman, J., Litman, C., Rosen, R., Schneider, S., & Silver, D. (2011)	RCT	11th	California, Arizona	Hispanic, Other, White	47 classrooms	Not Reported	√					√	None
Somers, M. A., Corrin, W., Sepanik, S., Salinger, T., Levin, J., and Zmach, C. (2010)	QE	9th	Urban	Black, Hispanic, White	5595	67%	√		√				None
Student Success Skills													
Urbina, I. (2011)	QE	9th, 10th	Not Reported	Hispanic	352	Not Reported	√						None

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Conflict of Interest Statement

Dr. Domitrovich is the co-developer of the Preschool PATHS programs, and in her previous position as a research associate at the Prevention Research Center at Penn State University she conducted a randomized controlled trial of the Facing History program that met criteria to be included in this Guide. Given these conflicts, Dr. Domitrovich is not involved in directly reviewing any of the program evaluations or materials for programs under review.

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