

## How Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Assessments Fit Into A Comprehensive Assessment System

Research into how social and emotional development in children affects learning is one of the fastest growing fields of study in education. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies that not only determine the quality of intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, but also support the ability to learn.

The Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) describes five broad and interrelated SEL competencies:

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

While most educators agree that a focus on SEL is critical in schools, determining which of the growing number of SEL assessments to select and administer can be difficult. CASEL recommends that educators:

1. Determine the purpose of the assessment—either formative (for learning) or summative (of learning)
2. Examine the reliability and validity of the available assessment(s)—that is, do they consistently measure what they purport to measure?
3. Focus on a strengths-based approach that looks at students' SEL assets rather than their deficits
4. Place a priority on selecting assessment(s) that ensure equity and eliminate bias in the test development process
5. Take care that these assessment(s) are never used for high-stakes educational decisions

In addition to knowing how to select the appropriate assessment, it may be equally difficult for educators to understand how to interpret and act on the results. It will be important that schools and districts that choose to include SEL assessments in their comprehensive assessment system provide ample guidance in how the data is leveraged to address areas of need, set expectations, combine with other available local data, and follow best practices in data literacy.

Prioritizing social and emotional learning has benefits for the entire school community, because it promises to improve student achievement, school climate, and mental health outcomes for both students and educators. For more information, check out the Resources and Put into Practice sections of this article on the following page.

## Resources

### Where Does Social and Emotional Learning Fit Within a Building and District Assessment System?

Guidelines for implementing a social and emotional learning assessment system within the larger comprehensive assessment system <https://www.michiganassessmentconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/LP-SEL-assessment-within-a-system.pdf>

### What is social and emotional learning?

An ALN Learning Point that introduces SEL and tips for recognizing and nurturing these competencies in children [https://www.michiganassessmentconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/LP-SOCIAL\\_EMOTIONAL\\_LEARNING.pdf](https://www.michiganassessmentconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/LP-SOCIAL_EMOTIONAL_LEARNING.pdf)

### How Can educators Assess Social and Emotional Learning?

This ALN Learning Point discusses how to choose appropriate social and emotional learning assessments <https://www.michiganassessmentconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/LP-SEL-Assessment.pdf>

### Choosing and Using SEL Competency Assessments: What Schools and Districts Need to Know

A comprehensive document that offers guidance for schools and districts in choosing SEL assessments <https://casel.org/choosing-and-using-sel-competency-assessments-what-schools-and-districts-need-to-know/>

## Put into Practice

1. Download and share the document [Process for Developing a Shared Vision & Plan for SEL | CASEL District Resource Center](#) and discuss ways to use this workbook with colleagues, with the goal of developing an SEL assessment plan to implement in your school or district.
2. If your school or district is already implementing an SEL assessment system, what training or guidance is provided for educators in interpreting the resulting results and combining it with other local data?