

# Supporting Evidence-based SEL Programs: What State Policymakers Can Do



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This issue brief, created by The Pennsylvania State University, is one of a series of briefs that addresses the future needs and challenges for research, practice, and policy on social and emotional learning (SEL). SEL is defined as 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. This is the second series of briefs that address SEL, made possible through support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The first set synthesized current SEL research on early support for parent engagement and its effects on child outcomes; SEL in infancy/toddlerhood, the preschool years, the elementary school period, and middle-high school timeframes; and how SEL influences teacher well-being, health equity, and school climate. Learn more at [prevention.psu.edu/sel](https://prevention.psu.edu/sel).

## Executive Summary

Policymakers are in a unique position to support social and emotional learning (SEL) in schools. State policymakers, specifically, can advocate for the local selection and implementation of high-quality, evidence-based SEL programs and create conditions that support these SEL programs across their states.

High-quality evidence-based SEL programs support students' academic performance in school and future success in life,<sup>1</sup> goals that all policymakers share for students. Recognizing this, many policymakers are prioritizing SEL at the state level. The 2022 CASEL State Scan<sup>29</sup> found that 27 states now have competencies for SEL, and 44 offer guidance to support SEL implementation. With support for SEL growing tremendously, state policymakers are creating a variety of innovative policies that prioritize the use of high-quality evidence-based SEL programs in schools.

State policymakers can support the implementation of evidence-based SEL programs directly through sustained policies, including the articulation of frameworks, competencies/standards, and funding for SEL. In addition, state policymakers can share guidance and resources, like the [CASEL Program Guide](#), with local policymakers and educators, covering how to identify and select high-quality evidence-based SEL programs that meet the needs of different communities.

Moreover, state policymakers can further support evidence-based SEL programs by fostering conditions that prioritize equity, quality implementation, and systemic integration through policy and guidance.

Some of these efforts include:

### Efforts that Support SEL and Equity:

- Policies that increase access to evidence-based SEL programs
- Training for educators to support culturally responsive implementation

### Efforts that Support SEL and Quality Implementation:

- Guidance for *implementing* carefully-selected evidence-programs as designed
- Guidance for *evaluating* evidence-based SEL programs, including any local adaptations

### Efforts that Support SEL and Systemic Integration:

- Guidance on how to reinforce SEL across all subject areas and in all settings where children and youth learn and grow
- Efforts to connect SEL efforts with existing state policies and systems to support SEL school-wide, at home, and in communities

While these lessons are crafted specifically with state policymakers in mind, all policymakers – at the federal, state, and local levels – can benefit from these recommendations.

## Introduction

The purpose of this issue brief is to discuss how state policymakers can effectively encourage and equip educators to adopt and implement evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs. Policymakers are in a unique position to support the adoption and implementation of high-quality, evidence-based SEL programs. As the field of SEL research has grown exponentially in the last two decades, evidence-based SEL programs have emerged as a powerful and effective way to promote social and emotional competencies in students.<sup>1,2</sup> Despite recent moments of political debate, these programs have been proven to advance priorities that all policymakers share, including improved academic outcomes and decreased conduct problems in schools.<sup>2</sup> In addition, SEL programs can support policymakers' goals for students related to prevention and preparation. Evidence-based programs can reduce students' levels of depression and anxiety in the short term<sup>3</sup> and equip students with the skills desired by employers in the long term.<sup>4</sup>

Policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels can encourage and advocate for evidence-based SEL programs as the foundation of every school's and district's plan to support SEL by creating guidance and policies. Specifically, state policymakers can create the conditions in which all educators can engage SEL across every setting and system within the classroom, school, and beyond. These conditions prioritize action for SEL in the service of equity, quality implementation, and systemic integration.

- **SEL and Equity:** SEL has the potential to “be a powerful lever for creating caring, just, inclusive, and healthy communities that support all individuals in reaching their fullest potential.”<sup>6</sup> As defined by CASEL, equity refers to “every student—across race, geography, ethnicity, family income levels, learning abilities, home language, immigration status, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other factors—engaging in high-quality educational opportunities and environments that best promote their healthy social, emotional, and academic development.”<sup>6</sup> To support equity and SEL, state policymakers can ensure that educators are equipped to make instruction culturally responsive for their students and offer guidance such that evidence-based programs are selected to best serve each and every student.
- **SEL and Quality of Implementation:** Research over the past 20 years has shown that SEL programs are more effective when they are implemented “as designed.”<sup>1</sup> In addition, research has shown that SEL programs have the largest effect when designed with a specific context or culture in mind.<sup>7</sup> To support high-quality SEL implementation, state policymakers can offer guidance that encourages fidelity to the implementation of carefully selected evidence-based SEL programs and guidance that provides everyone in the school with common strategies to support students' unique social and emotional development.

SEL can be defined as process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.<sup>5</sup>

- **Systemic SEL:** The field of SEL asserts that SEL is most effective when it is systemic,<sup>8</sup> such that it is reinforced across all settings and contexts in which students spend their time in and out of school. To support systemic SEL in the context of evidence-based SEL programs in schools, state policymakers can make systemic connections across a wide variety of efforts at the state level (e.g., academics, career and workforce development, school climate, etc.) to support these programs, and partner with families and communities to reinforce SEL across all subject areas and in all settings where children and youth learn and grow.

Much of our understanding of the steps that policymakers can take to support SEL comes from our experience working over the past six years with 43 states now connected to the CASEL Collaborating States Initiative.<sup>9</sup>

While this brief is written specifically for state policymakers, all policymakers – at the federal, state, and local levels – can benefit from these recommendations. In the sections below, we provide an overview of the *CASEL Program Guide's*<sup>10</sup> selection of high-quality, evidence-based SEL programs. We illustrate how state policymakers currently support these programs with attention to equity, quality implementation, and systemic integration. In addition, we share a few examples based on what we have observed in CASEL's CSI. We conclude with recommendations for what state policymakers can do going forward.

CASEL's Collaborating States Initiative (CSI) is designed to help state teams create statewide conditions where districts and schools are encouraged and equipped to engage in evidence-based, systemic social and emotional learning (SEL), so that all students have the social and emotional competencies and skills they will need to succeed in life and work in the future.



## Evidence-Based SEL Programs

There have been over ten separate meta-analyses of universal SEL programs representing results from hundreds of individual studies with rigorous designs and hundreds of thousands of students providing data – from early childhood to high school – demonstrating the effectiveness of evidence-based SEL programs.<sup>1,7,11-18</sup> These meta-analyses and the studies they represent collectively show that evidence-based SEL programs enhance academic performance and social and emotional competence at the same time that they increase prosocial behaviors.

The *CASEL Program Guide* is designed to systemically evaluate and identify classroom-based programs (PreK–Grade 12) that meet three broad criteria: (1) designed to promote SEL; (2) demonstrating evidence of effectiveness; and (3) offering training and support to promote high-quality implementation. In addition, it shares guidance for district and school teams on selecting and implementing programs and offers recommendations on SEL practices, research, and policy. At the time of this writing, there are 86 nationally available evidence-based SEL programs for classroom use in the *CASEL Program Guide*. The term “evidence-based” requires the program to have an evaluation that meets four evidence criteria, which include (a) the type of research design used, (b) the setting in which the program was implemented, (c) the statistical findings, and (d) the outcomes improved in the evaluation. The programs are organized in three tiers (SElect, Promising, and SEL Supportive) and related to the level at which they meet the criteria. More information regarding these tiers of evidence can be found in the *CASEL Program Guide’s* Connect Your Criteria.<sup>19</sup>

**TABLE 1**

### Number of programs ( $n = 86$ ) with evidence of effectiveness for different types of academic and behavioral outcomes

<b>Student Outcomes</b>	
Improved academic performance	29 (34%)
Reduced emotional distress	16 (19%)
Improved identity development and agency	8 (9%)
Reduced problem behavior	41 (48%)
Improved school climate	8 (9%)
Improved school connectedness	16 (19%)
Improved social behavior	32 (37%)
Improved other SEL skills and attitudes	39 (45%)
<b>Teacher Outcomes</b>	
Improved teaching practices	11(13%)

A wide variety of evidence-based SEL programs are available across the PreK–12 grade range in the *CASEL Program Guide*. Specifically, 25 of the 86 programs are designed for early childhood (P–1: 29%), 56 are designed for elementary school (K–6: 65%), 46 for middle school (6–8: 53%), and 34 for high school (9–12: 40%).<sup>1</sup>

According to the *CASEL Program Guide*,<sup>10</sup> 11 programs have shown strong evidence of effectiveness at the preschool level. Elementary and middle school levels have more programs with strong evidence of effectiveness, ranging from 12 to 24 programs per grade level. Similarly, 19 effective programs have been established for grade 9, but fewer for grades 10–12 (ranging from 13 to 7 programs, respectively). Thus, numerous evidence-based SEL programs are available at each grade range within PreK–12.

Studies of these evidence-based SEL programs have measured a wide variety of academic and social outcomes. As Table 1 reveals, evaluations of these programs show strong evidence of effectiveness across outcome domains. For example, nearly 50% of the 86 programs included in the *CASEL Program Guide* have evidence of reducing student problem behavior and over 33% have demonstrated that they improve academic performance.

The *CASEL Program Guide* provides guidance for local policymakers and educators in selecting evidence-based programming.<sup>10</sup>

#### **How to Select an Evidence-based Program from the *CASEL Program Guide*:**

- Determine Your SEL Team and Goals
- Connect Your SEL Needs to CASEL Metrics
- Identify and Compare SEL Programs

After identifying candidate programs, local policymakers and educators are encouraged to research them carefully by exploring websites, watching program videos, and reaching out to program providers. Program providers may be helpful in offering program samples or identifying satisfied program users; however, the contacts provided may be a biased sample. Local policymakers and educators might also use “word of mouth” to locate other schools using a specific program to learn more. You can learn more about this process in the [Guide](#).

## Evidence-based SEL Programs and Equity

To ensure that every student will benefit from evidence-based SEL programs, the programs must be culturally responsive and available for all students. Many of the nationally available, evidence-based SEL programs now offer supports to help educators become more culturally responsive in their instruction so that every student feels they are welcomed and belong. When programs in the *CASEL Program Guide* include culturally responsive practices, their program description will begin with a section entitled “Strategies Supporting Educational Equity.” For example, the program “Facing History and Ourselves” is described as offering “strategies for understanding context, working with bias, customizing for context, and youth action projects.”<sup>10</sup>

It is also important to note that many evidence-based SEL programs have now been evaluated or co-created with diverse populations, suggesting the potential of these programs to support diverse groups of students. The *CASEL Program Guide* describes the ways in which specific programs have been designed for and/or evaluated with diverse student populations. This is important as SEL interventions have the largest effect size when designed for a specific context or culture in mind.<sup>7</sup>

Table 2 shows that across broad categories of racial and ethnic groups, programs have been evaluated with diverse groups of students, especially for Black and Hispanic students. Similarly, over 75% of programs have been evaluated with low-income populations (typically defined based on percentage of free and reduced cost lunch).

Similarly, Table 3 shows that SEL approaches have been evaluated across different geographic populations. As the numbers reveal, most studies have been conducted with urban students (and more research will be important with suburban and rural students especially). The numbers suggest that studies have been evenly distributed for the most part across different regions of the country.

**TABLE 2**

### Number of programs ( $n = 86$ ) evaluated with specific populations of students

Asian/Asian American	14 (16%)
Black/African American	56 (65%)
Hispanic/Latinx	58 (67%)
Indigenous	2 (2%)
White	59 (69%)
Multiracial	15 (17%)
Low Income	66 (77%)

Many available programs are likely to be helpful in meeting the needs of specific communities. In the best-case scenario, programs have been designed and evaluated with the population that they are serving. As the need for localized efforts becomes more clear, continued development and evaluation of SEL programs for a variety of populations is necessary in order to best support every student.

**TABLE 3**  
**Number of programs (n = 86) evaluated with different geographic groups**

Rural	17 (20%)
Urban	52 (60%)
Suburban	31 (36%)
Northeastern	22 (26%)
Southeastern	25 (29%)
Southwestern	15 (17%)
Midwestern	22 (26%)
Western	27 (31%)
Non-U.S.	10 (12%)

## Evidence-based SEL Programs and Quality of Implementation

It has been well established that programs become less effective when teachers do not follow the manualized aspects of a program (e.g., not implementing instructions carefully or skipping program components).<sup>20-22</sup> As a result of research demonstrating the importance of “fidelity of implementation,” an entire field of implementation science now exists and supports the implementation of SEL programs.<sup>23-25</sup> Noting this, utilizing the manualized aspect of programs included in the *CASEL Program Guide* is important to ensure that practices and implementation are high-quality.

To prepare educators to implement programs well, 70 of the programs in the *CASEL Program Guide* offer on-site in-person training (81%), 79 programs (92%) provide virtual training, 48 (56%) offer offsite training, and 65 (76%) offer train-the-trainer models. Further, 82 (95%) offer technical support, 44 (51%) offer professional learning communities, 63 (73%) offer coaching, and 73 (85%) offer supports for administrators.

While following the curriculum of an SEL program is recommended, some level of local adaptations is expected, especially if the program has not been designed for or evaluated with a specific population. Although negative adaptations can decrease program effectiveness, teachers and schools can make positive adaptations to better suit the context or culture of students. Positive adaptations include adding components that are of local concern or that enhance cultural responsiveness, increasing the time allotted for lessons

when needed, or linking local curricula in areas such as literacy, science, and social studies to enrich the lessons and create greater integration. Another form of adaptation (due to the Covid-19 pandemic as well as online technology) has been the implementation of evidence-based programs in online formats or virtual training. Rarely have these versions been assessed to determine whether they achieve the same positive outcomes as when delivered in-person. Evaluations for continuous improvement are critical, especially when these adaptations occur to ensure effectiveness.

Evidence-based SEL programs often provide tools and supports for educators to improve or assess their implementation. A total of 71 programs out of the 86 (83%) offer tools for measuring student success, 63 (73%) provide self-report tools for monitoring implementation, and 58 (67%) provide observational tools to monitor implementation. Whether the evidence-based SEL program has been adapted or not, quality-implementation depends on a commitment to continuous improvement.

## Evidence-based SEL Programs and Systemic Integration

Some evidence-based SEL programs designed for classrooms are only designed to be implemented in defined classes or time periods, while others provide linkages to broader issues of systemic change including integration with other academic curricula, revising disciplinary procedures, connecting with parents, linking to out-of-school programs, etc. However, all classroom-based evidence-based SEL programs will be enhanced when they are coordinated systemically with broader efforts to support SEL schoolwide, at home, and in communities. Systemic integration of SEL works to ensure alignment and coordination of guidance and resources across all the settings in which students learn and grow (i.e., classrooms, schools, families, and communities) in order to generalize and reinforce the skills students are learning as part of a program. This requires an alignment of more distal policies (districts, state, federal) to ensure systems at every level are working together in coordinated, mutually supportive ways to optimize social and emotional development.<sup>8</sup> CASEL provides additional tools like the *CASEL Schoolwide Guide*<sup>26</sup> and the District Resource Center<sup>27</sup> to help with this type of systemic integration.

Almost every SEL program in the *CASEL Program Guide* (97% [83]) provide strategies for use in the classroom. For example, of the 86 programs in the *CASEL Program Guide*, the vast majority (81% [70]) provide free-standing lessons to teach students SEL skills and competencies during discrete sessions. A total of 15 programs (17%) offer generalizable teaching practices that educators can use throughout the school day.

Many programs also provide strategies to promote generalization and reinforcement of skills across other settings, as well. Ten programs (12%) offer strategies specifically designed to support the integration of SEL into academic subjects and/or across school settings, and an additional ten (12%) offer broader organizational practices (i.e., to foster systemic implementation).

Additionally, 64 programs (74%) provide school-wide strategies to support SEL. A total of 32 programs (37%) provide strategies for promoting SEL within the community, and 75 programs (87%) provide strategies for supporting SEL generalization in the home.

## The Role of Policy and State Examples

State policymakers can explicitly promote the adoption of evidence-based SEL programs directly through sustained policies and guidance. In addition, there are many ways state policymakers can help create conditions that will encourage districts and schools to adopt evidence-based SEL programs with attention to equity, quality implementation, and systemic integration.

State policymakers can begin by prioritizing SEL through both financial and human resources. Another important way states can signal that SEL is a priority is by articulating an SEL framework, creating competencies/standards for SEL, and/or promoting guidance for SEL. Ten years ago, only four states had articulated competencies for SEL. In 2020, CASEL reported that 18 states had articulated SEL competencies.<sup>28</sup> Two years later, the 2022 CASEL State Scan<sup>29</sup> found that 27 states now have competencies for SEL, and 44 offer guidance to support SEL implementation. Growth in these foundational SEL policies has been tremendous<sup>29</sup> and signals that states are now prioritizing SEL. Foundational policies serve as a base on which policymakers can advocate for evidence-based SEL programs and build systemic SEL policy. CASEL provides guiding resources on how to create a set of high-quality policies in the State Theory of Action,<sup>30</sup> Key Features Tool,<sup>31</sup> Recommended Process Tool,<sup>32</sup> and Process for Developing and Articulating Learning Goals or Competencies Tool.<sup>33</sup>

### Evidence-based SEL Programs: Examples in States

Supported by these foundational statewide competencies and guidance,<sup>33</sup> state policymakers can support local policymakers and educators by providing guidance on how to select evidence-based SEL programs that meet student needs. State policymakers can share strong resources (such as the *CASEL Program Guide*,<sup>10</sup> the *Schoolwide Guide*,<sup>26</sup> the NIRN Hexagon tool,<sup>34</sup> the What Works Clearinghouse,<sup>35</sup> and Navigating SEL from the Inside Out<sup>36</sup>) that help them identify and compare high-quality, evidence-based SEL programs.

For example, social and emotional learning resource pages on the [Connecticut](#) and [Wisconsin](#) Department of Education web sites link directly to the *CASEL Program Guide* to help local policymakers and educators learn about and select evidence-based programs. Further, to ensure schools and districts within Wisconsin were aware of evidence-based SEL programs, the state invited (CASEL SElect) program providers to develop crosswalks to demonstrate how their program aligned with Wisconsin's SEL framework. The state also produced recorded webinars with each of those program providers that are now available as part of [Wisconsin's curriculum and alignment tools for SEL](#). In another example, a statewide community of practice in Florida identified evidence-based SEL programs being widely used across the state, as well as contacts in each of those districts. Through this effort, other schools in [Florida](#) can connect to their peers to learn about their experience using particular evidence-based SEL programs.

## Equity: Examples in States

Just like individual students, districts and schools are at different starting points when it comes to SEL, and they represent diverse populations. For these reasons, state policymakers should work to increase access to SEL programs for all students. In addition, state policymakers should encourage local policymakers to select programs that have been designed and evaluated for the specific populations of their students.

Noting that not all programs have been designed or evaluated for diverse populations, state policymakers should create SEL policies that prioritize flexibility such that programs can be selected that best serve the needs of each district's students. For example, Washington's SEL Implementation guide provides guidance on how teachers can remain equity-focused in their work with students. Encouraging states to move beyond a compliance focus, the CASEL Collaborating States Initiative<sup>9</sup> promotes the design of flexible policies, tools, and guidance that help districts and schools create customized conditions to support each and every student's development.

Moreover, states can directly promote equity and culturally responsive practice by ensuring SEL approaches are effective in their local context. For example, [Massachusetts](#) and [New York](#) offer guidance for culturally responsive practice, and [Illinois](#) will fully adopt culturally responsive teaching and leading standards for all educators in 2025. These standards allow all educators within a school to be equipped with strategies to support all students, as different students may need different supports to make the same equitable growth in social and emotional development.



## High-Quality Implementation: Examples in States

Another important way state policymakers can promote the use of evidence-based SEL programs is through professional learning. A number of states, including [Arizona](#), [Michigan](#), [Minnesota](#), and [Washington](#), have developed professional learning modules designed to help educators become familiar with SEL. Many of these include specific modules on how to select evidence-based SEL programs.

As previously discussed, an important consideration of evidence-based SEL programs is adaptation. A local policymaker's or educator's decision to innovate or develop their own approach to an evidence-based SEL program amplifies the need for state policymakers to provide strong guidance and standards. For example, guidance might encourage districts and schools to collaborate with program providers to test innovations or adaptations to an evidence-based SEL program. Program providers know better than anyone the key elements of their program that must be preserved.

With a commitment to continuous improvement, state policymakers can also create guidance and systems related to measurement and data analysis (e.g., the importance of disaggregated data, which is critical for ensuring equity) as part of necessary evaluation to ensure the adaptation and program is having desired effects. Several states have developed valuable guidance and tools to support continuous improvement. See [Minnesota's Guidance](#) for assessment of SEL, [Nevada's School Climate/SEL Survey](#), and [Wisconsin's SEL Development Tracker](#).

## Systemic Integration: Examples in States

State policymakers can also help build connections that promote systemic integration of evidence-based SEL programs through the alignment of "policies, resources, and actions" at the state, district, and school level.<sup>8</sup> A foundational example of systemic integration is aligning SEL competencies or guidance with academic standards. Massachusetts provides SEL-related guiding principles across curriculum [frameworks](#) subject areas including comprehensive health (1999), mathematics (2017), ELA and literacy (2017), history and social science (2018), arts (2019), and world languages (2021). Each guiding principle in Massachusetts includes examples of intersections between the respective content-area standards and practices and SEL competencies. [North Carolina](#) maps SEL to all of its academic standards. [Arizona](#) shares a variety of tools and guidance (including infographics) on its SEL webpage for integrating SEL into specific academic areas, and [Pennsylvania](#) presents SEL as part of its career-ready skills.

Another effort that promotes systemic SEL includes creating policies and resources that guide and support families in reinforcing SEL skills learned in evidence-based programs. [Connecticut](#) offers a professional learning series for families, and [Virginia](#) offered guidance specifically for families during the pandemic.

State policymakers also can develop policies and structures to promote understanding and integration of SEL within the community. The state of Washington developed an [SEL implementation brief for community and youth development organizations](#),<sup>37</sup> which provides information about what SEL is, how it is being implemented in Washington state, and action steps and resources that communities can use to support students.

Finally, and crucial to systemic integration, states play a key role in funding SEL, and especially evidence-based SEL programs. Policies or guidance are less likely to make an impact on the social and emotional development of students when they are unfunded. Thus, state policymakers must support the implementation and integration of evidence-based SEL programs with both financial and human resources. To ensure that SEL policies and guidance are fully supported to function effectively, some states, such as Colorado, have developed freestanding sources of funding for SEL. [Washington](#) state has legislated the offering of research-based SEL curriculum grants to districts and mandated that the *CASEL Program Guide* be used to select evidence-based programs. Other states provide guidance on how to use federal funding to support SEL. [Arizona provides guidance](#) on funding SEL programs and [Wisconsin's SEL webpage](#) offers "grant" program information.



# Conclusions and Recommendations for State Actions

Evidence-based SEL programs support students' academic performance in school and future success in life,<sup>1</sup> goals that all policymakers prioritize for students. Based on our experience working with 43 states over the past six years, we recommend state policymakers promote adoption and implementation of evidence-based SEL programs in the following ways:

- Prioritize SEL through funding, human resources, and the articulation of frameworks, competencies/standards, and guidance for SEL.
- Encourage local policymakers and educators to consult with the program developer before adapting or innovating evidence-based SEL programs.
- Provide guidance that explicitly encourages districts and schools to adopt evidence-based SEL programs.
- Provide encouragement and guidance on how to evaluate SEL efforts, including adaptations and innovations.
- Provide guidance to local policymakers and educators on how to identify and select high-quality, evidence-based SEL programs that meet the needs of different communities by using resources like the *CASEL Program Guide* to help.
- Provide guidance for systemic integration of evidence-based SEL programs and approaches. It may be helpful to develop state-specific guidance that connects to existing state policies and systems, but it can also be very useful simply to connect to high-quality resources on how to implement SEL, such as the CASEL District Resource Center and *Schoolwide Guide*.<sup>26,27</sup>
- Create flexible policies that increase access to evidence-based SEL programs and training for educators to support culturally responsive implementation.

There is so much that policymakers at all levels of government can do to encourage adoption and implementation of high-quality, evidence-based SEL programs. Additional supports outside the scope of this brief, such as equipping adults with social and emotional skills or engaging families and communities, are key components of best supporting evidence-based SEL programs. Future research will be important to ensure the social and emotional skill development of all students and to evaluate and support adoption of evidence-based SEL programs. For example, more research is needed to demonstrate the effectiveness of evidence-based SEL programs and approaches with a wider variety of populations, in virtual environments, and in the context of other innovations/adaptations. Undoubtedly, evidence-based SEL programs will need to continue to be refined and improved in the service of equity, quality implementation, and systemic integration. Meanwhile, in the absence of strong existing research to answer some of these specific questions or needs, policymakers are uniquely positioned to offer guidance, systems, and evaluation support to help schools and districts gather and analyze their own data to ensure evidence-based SEL programs are having desired effects.

### Acknowledgment

The state policy examples and learnings shared in this brief have been made possible by the dedicated work of states in CASEL's Collaborating States Initiative.

### Suggested Citation

Dermody, C., & Dusenbury, L. (2022). *Supporting Evidence-based SEL Programs: What State Policymakers Can Do*. University Park, PA: Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center, The Pennsylvania State University.

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**Linda Dusenbury, Ph.D.**, is a nationally recognized expert with more than three decades of experience developing, supporting, and evaluating evidence-based strategies designed to promote student social and emotional competence, advance future-ready skills, and prevent adolescent problem behaviors, including drug abuse and violence. She has consulted extensively with state education agencies as well as national nonprofit organizations, including the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) for more than a dozen years. She co-launched and then led CASEL's Collaborating States Initiative (CSI), a multistate effort, from 2015 to 2022. The CSI supports state policymakers in creating conditions where social and emotional learning (SEL) can thrive at the district, school, community, and family levels. By 2022, more than 40 states (serving more than 30 million K-12 students) have participated in the CSI. She has also been involved in CASEL's reviews of evidence-based SEL programs and state scans of state learning competencies and guidance for SEL. Prior to her work as a consultant, Linda served on the faculty of Weill Medical College of Cornell University, and as a senior researcher at Tanglewood Research, Inc. She has published more than 100 professional articles and chapters and also has co-edited two books in the Vermont Conference on the Primary Prevention of Psychopathology series. She received her B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Vermont, and completed postdoctoral training at Indiana University as part of its NIMH Clinical Scientist Training Program.

## ENDNOTE

- 1 Percentages add up to more than 86 because some programs span multiple developmental ranges.

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