Program Selection Worksheets

HOW TO USE THE NAVIGATING SEL GUIDE

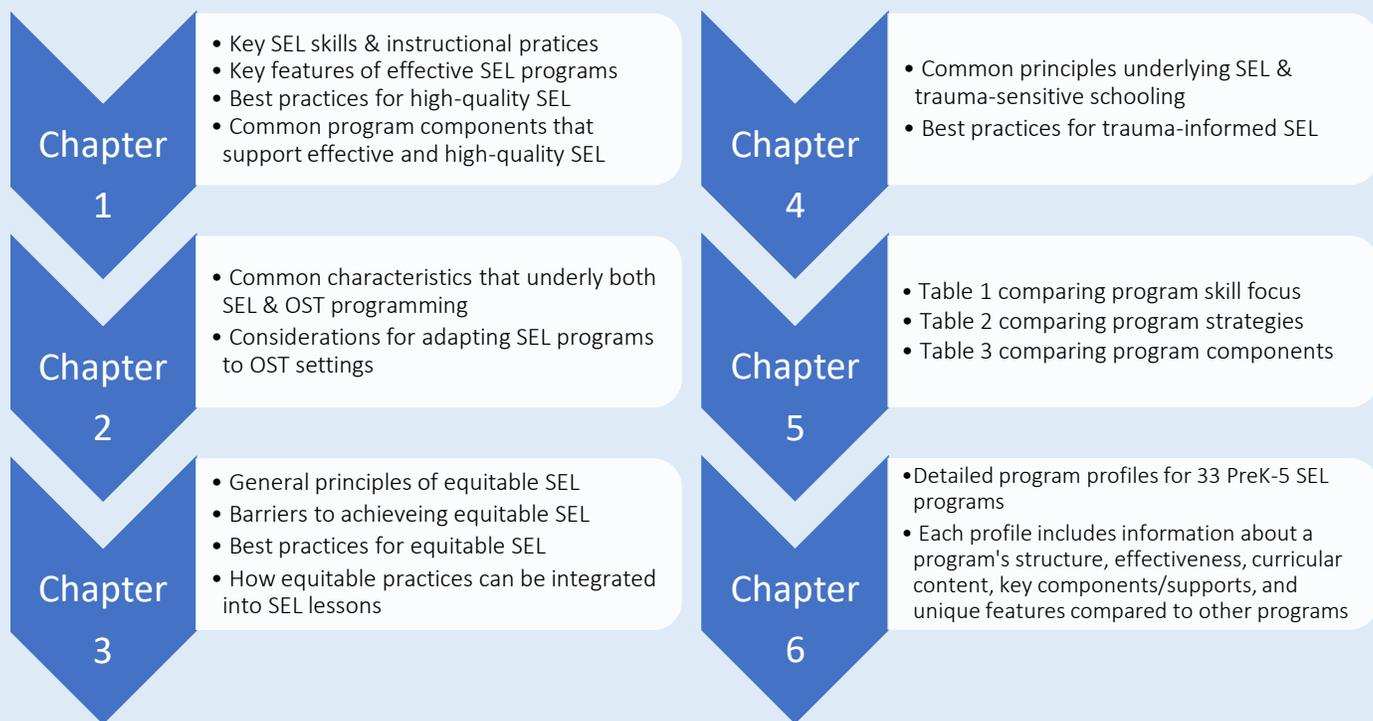SELECTING, ADAPTING, AND LEARNING FROM EXISTING SEL PROGRAMS

(PRESCHOOL AND ELEMENTARY FOCUS)

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What does the Navigating SEL report include?

Chapter 1
- Key SEL skills & instructional pratices
- Key features of effective SEL programs
- Best practices for high-quality SEL
- Common program components that support effective and high-quality SEL

Chapter 2
- Common characteristics that underly both SEL & OST programming
- Considerations for adapting SEL programs to OST settings

Chapter 3
- General principles of equitable SEL
- Barriers to achieving equitable SEL
- Best practices for equitable SEL
- How equitable practices can be integrated into SEL lessons

Chapter 4
- Common principles underlying SEL & trauma-sensitive schooling
- Best practices for trauma-informed SEL

Chapter 5
- Table 1 comparing program skill focus
- Table 2 comparing program strategies
- Table 3 comparing program components

Chapter 6
- Detailed program profiles for 33 PreK-5 SEL programs
- Each profile includes information about a program's structure, effectiveness, curricular content, key components/supports, and unique features compared to other programs

How can the Navigating SEL report be used?

This guide provides detailed and transparent information about commonly used, evidence-based SEL programs. By breaking down each program in detail, this report enables schools, preschool and early childhood education (ECE) providers, and out-of-school time (OST) organizations to see whether and how well individual programs might:

- address their intended SEL goals or needs (e.g., bullying prevention, character education, behavior management, school readiness, etc.);
- align with a specific mission (e.g., promoting physical fitness, community service, the arts, etc.);
- meet the specific social and emotional and behavioral needs of their students (e.g., behavior regulation, conflict resolution, academic motivation, executive function and early learning skills, etc.);
- fit within their schedule or programmatic structure;
- integrate into existing school climate and culture initiatives, positive behavioral supports, and/or trauma-informed systems;
- complement other educational or programmatic goals outside of SEL (e.g., a school looking to boost student literacy scores or make up for the absence of a regular art or music class might consider selecting a program that frequently incorporates reading and writing activities, drawing and creative projects, or music and songs);
- ensure that SEL programming is equitable (i.e., relevant, beneficial, and culturally-appropriate for all students); and
- bridge OST settings and the regular school day.

This type of information can be used by schools, ECE providers, and OST organizations to: (1) select specific programs or strategies that best meet their individual needs; (2) guide planning and goal-setting conversations with school and district leaders, ECE administrators, OST partners, and other stakeholders; and/or (3) re-evaluate the fit and effectiveness of SEL programs and structures already in use.

USING THE NAVIGATING SEL GUIDE TO HELP WITH DECISION-MAKING

There are many ways to use the Navigating SEL guide (see box on the previous page) and we imagine it will serve different purposes for different stakeholders. However, our primary purpose for developing this guide is to provide schools, early childhood education (ECE) and out-of-school time (OST) providers, and other organizations and individuals who work directly with children with a comprehensive resource to support decision-making about SEL programming and strategies. Key stakeholders such as district and school leaders, teachers, counselors, curriculum coordinators, ECE and OST directors and staff, and SEL committees/teams may wish to use this guide to understand more about SEL and the landscape of SEL programming, evaluate the appropriateness and fit of their current SEL program, and/or select new programming or strategies. This guide may also serve as a resource for developing a coherent school, district, or organizational SEL plan, of which an SEL program may only be one part (see box to the right).

With this in mind, this worksheet supplement outlines a streamlined program selection process that is designed to help you use this guide to select and adapt SEL programming that best fits the needs of your school or organization.

A Note About District Planning:

If you are using this guide to select a program as part of a district plan for SEL, **keep in mind implementing a SEL program or curriculum may be only one piece of a larger picture.** Multiple factors in the school environment influence whether and how students develop and use SEL competencies and skills, and it is useful to address SEL outcomes using multiple coordinated strategies. Likewise, SEL is most effective when it is integrated throughout the day in a cohesive and complementary way. Therefore, in addition to implementing an SEL program or curriculum, it is important to consider how your district or organization will also support SEL through complementary school culture and climate initiatives, behavioral and disciplinary practices, professional development, and overarching norms and expectations.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CAREFUL PLANNING

There are many factors to consider when selecting a SEL program. To begin with, there are logistical considerations such as time, training, and cost. These are often key factors in driving decision making; however, while these parameters are certainly an important starting point, there are a number of other considerations that also influence program impact. Programs are ultimately most successful not only when they are feasible (i.e. align well with the resources and constraints of a particular setting) but also when they are a "good fit" for the context and needs. This means that programming is relevant and appropriate for your population and can be implemented effectively and as intended. Even among the highest-quality, evidence-based approaches to SEL, implementation plays a critical role in shaping outcomes. For example, selecting a program that includes a set of sequenced lessons that intentionally build on each other over time and only choosing to implement certain lessons – whether due to lack of time or teacher and student buy-in – is not likely to yield desired results unless the program is designed to be flexible in that way. As this guide illustrates, programs vary greatly in their content focus, instructional methods, and additional features and

supports beyond core lessons (e.g., training, family and community engagement, culture and climate supports, adaptations for special education classrooms and English Language Learners, etc.). It is important to use relevant data (e.g., from discipline referrals; classroom observations; school climate questionnaires; staff, student, and parent surveys; etc.) to understand the needs of your student and teacher population, including what skills are most important to focus on, which instructional methods best align with student interests and teacher skills, and which programs offer additional components that will help support high-quality implementation in your particular setting.

KEY FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING A PROGRAM

We hope that these resources will enable you to select the program that best fits your specific needs and complements the existing programming, practices, and structures of your setting. Below, we outline some of the key factors to consider when thinking about SEL programming. This list is by no means exhaustive and each individual school, district, or organization should consider their specific context as well as any potential barriers or constraints. Keep in mind that selecting a program that best fits your needs and context will ultimately lead to better results.

1. **Skill Focus.** Major social and emotional skills and competencies can be categorized into six domains: cognitive, emotion, social, values, perspectives, and identity. As illustrated in this guide, programs vary greatly in the extent to which they focus on each of these domains and the skills they encompass. Some programs target a range of skills relatively equally, while others focus more heavily on a specific skill set or domain. Given the variation, it is important to think about your students' needs as well as the existing programs and practices already in place.

   For example, if you want to build a more general comprehensive set of SEL skills, you will want to identify programs that focus on a variety of skill domains. On the other hand, if you are responding to a specific need, for example building positive relationships and reducing bullying, you may want to narrow in on programs that focus more heavily on emotion and social skills in conjunction with ethical and civic values.

2. **Instructional Methods.** Instructional methods refer to the types of strategies and activities through which programs teach content knowledge, for example, the use of class discussions, books, art, writing, or games. It is important to consider the type of instructional practices that are likely to be most effective for your population and align with the experience, comfort-level, and skills of the adults who will be leading program activities. You might also consider practices that are already in place and how particular instructional methods will complement these existing practices and/or provide added value.

   For example, if classrooms already do a morning meeting or circle time, programs that incorporate games, songs, or short discussions that can be integrated into that existing structure might be a good choice. Alternatively, if you have observed that instruction in other areas is predominantly didactic, you might consider incorporating other instructional methods like class discussions, games, or

kinesthetic activities that offer students a range of opportunities to more directly participate, work together, and engage other learning styles.

3. **Program Components.** Programs frequently include additional components designed to extend SEL beyond the classroom, support adults to implement the program effectively, and address common challenges or areas of need in a school, ECE program, or OST site. This includes things like support for training, school climate and culture, assessment tools, opportunities for flexibility and adaption, and more. These features may be embedded within programming or be available as complements or add-ons. When making decisions, program components often play a significant role in determining how effective a program will be given your specific context and needs.

    For example, if your school or organization has little experience with SEL, support for training and professional development may be high on your list of priorities. At the same time, if a program requires extensive training that is time-intensive or costly, it is important to weigh these factors in your decision-making. In this guide we highlight some important considerations and practices associated with high-quality, effective SEL implementation (*Chapter 1: Background on SEL Skills and Interventions*), and it is important to think about how different program components might help achieve those practices.

Ensuring SEL Programming is Relevant, Relatable, and Equitable:

As we discuss in *Chapter 3: Achieving Equitable SEL*, social and emotional learning programs have at times been called out for ignoring or ineffectively addressing the social, emotional, and academic needs of diverse populations (e.g., students of color, students with disabilities, and other marginalized youth) and for reinforcing dominant cultural norms in ways that devalue other ways of being and fail to adequately address and push against forms of systemic oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, poverty, trauma, etc.) that impact the social and emotional wellbeing of not only students from marginalized communities but also those from the dominant culture, and ultimately of society as a whole.

When selecting an SEL program, it is important to understand who your students are and where they come from, and to understand what types of resources SEL programs provide for adapting lesson content to meet the needs of diverse learners (e.g., students of diverse backgrounds and cultures, English Language Learners, students with disabilities, students who have experienced trauma, etc.) and challenge oppressive or harmful systems.

Programs provide different types of resource and levels of support to ensure that content is relevant, affirming, and beneficial for all students, from incorporating books, stories, and pictures that represent a wide array of backgrounds, identities, and experiences, to providing educators with training resources to understand trauma and explore their own identities and biases, to offering lessons or adaptations designed for use with specific student populations. Information available in Chapter 3 of the Navigating SEL guide provides more information about what to look for in SEL programs to ensure they meet the needs of all students in your school, ECE center, or OST program.

PROGRAM SELECTION PROCESS AND WORKSHEETS

With these key factors in mind, we recommend using the process listed below and the accompanying worksheets as a starting point for program selection and decision-making.

PROGRAM SELECTION PROCESS

Assess Your Needs

Drawing from data and stakeholder input, identify and prioritize the specific needs and goals that motivate program selection. In this step, you will also consider existing parameters that may influence decision making, such as cost, training, time, and content focus.

Review the Programs

Once you have identified your priorities and goals, use the guide to review in-depth information about different SEL programs and narrow in on those that best fit your needs. In this step, you will consider three dimensions of programming: skill focus, instructional methods, and program components that support effective SEL.

Consider Logistics

Having narrowed down your list of programs, consider how the program will be implemented and whether it aligns with the goals and parameters you have identified. This includes thinking about program structure and timing as well as leadership and training.

Choose a Program

Reflect upon the information collected in the previous steps to select a program. Revisit the guide as needed and share information with key stakeholders to identify the pros and cons of each program, and ultimately to select a program that best fits your needs and goals.

STEP 1: ASSESS YOUR NEEDS

This worksheet is designed to guide you through a suggested 4-step process for selecting a program that best fits your needs and goals.

First, you will **assess the needs** of your school or organization. Then, you will **review the programs** based on skill focus, instructional methods, and program components. You will use the information gathered to **select a program**, and finally you will **create a preliminary plan** for implementation.

> **Learn More about SEL**
>
> Before using these worksheets, we recommend reading Chapters 1-4 of the Navigating SEL guide to learn more about SEL skills and interventions (Chapter 1), SEL in out-of-school settings (Chapter 2), and equitable (Chapter 3) and trauma-sensitive SEL (Chapter 4).

FOCUS QUESTIONS

What prompted your school or organization to search for an SEL program?

_____

_____

Do you have a specific mission and/or existing requirements or initiatives with which you are trying to align SEL programming, such as school climate, community service, health & wellness, PBIS and/or MTSS, etc.? Please list them here:

_____

_____

NEEDS AND GOALS

What are the top 3 SEL-related goals of your school, early childhood, or out-of-school time program?

1.   _____

2.   _____

3.   _____

Keeping in mind your specific context and student population, what do you hope your students will gain *the most* from SEL programming? (Examples: anti-bullying, empathy, positive school climate, etc.)

_____

DATA

What sources of data will you use to assess your needs and goals to guide your choice of SEL programming? We recommend including a combination of staff, student, family, and community input. Circle any and all that apply:

| School climate survey | Disciplinary records | Staff, student, parent questionnaires/ interviews | Classroom observations | Other:_____ |

CONSIDERATIONS

Thinking about the above questions, what other factors may influence your decision when choosing an SEL program? Please circle any and all that apply:

Cost	Training requirements	Ongoing support
Time per lesson	Duration of program	Includes assessments
Addresses specific skill (list below):	Includes Specific Features (list below):	Other (list below):

_____   _____   _____

STEP 2: REVIEW THE PROGRAMS

The following pages will help you to narrow in on specific programs based on your priorities. Information about the programs is presented along three different dimensions: skill focus, instructional methods, and program components. You may have identified additional priorities which further narrow your programs of interest (such as evidence of effectiveness, specific population, etc.). Program profiles contain in-depth information that may also help inform your decision-making.

SKILL FOCUS

Looking at the chart below, consider specific skill domains and skills that are most important for your school or organization based on the points of alignment, opportunities/constraints, and needs identified in Step 1. What, if any, skill domains would you like to prioritize? Please circle your top priorities here:

SEL SKILLS				
Cognitive	Attention Control	Working Memory & Planning Skills	Inhibitory Control	Cognitive Flexibility	Critical Thinking
Emotion	Emotional Knowledge & Expression	Emotional & Behavioral Regulation	Empathy/ Perspective Taking		
Social	Understanding Social Cues	Conflict Resolution/Social Problem Solving	Prosocial/ Cooperative Behavior		
Values	Ethical Values	Performance Values	Civic Values	Intellectual Values	
Perspectives	Optimism	Gratitude	Openness	Enthusiasm/ Zest	
Identity	Self-Knowledge	Purpose	Self-Efficacy/ Growth Mindset	Self Esteem	

For a more detailed description of each skill domain and skills, please refer to Chapter 1 of the guide.

Now that you have identified your top skill priorities, please use the comparison tables in Chapter 5 of the guide to find programs that align with these needs. Use the lists on the following pages to choose programs based on desired skill domains and skills.

Skill Domain/Skill	Programs
Example: Cognitive Skills	*SECURe, Second Step*

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Consider the chart below. Are there specific instructional methods that you are most interested in using? Think about both the students who will be using the program and the instructors who will be leading or facilitating it. Circle any that apply:

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS			
Books/Stories	Drawing	Visual Displays	Games
Discussion (whole class/peer)	Art/Creative Projects	SEL Tool	Worksheets
Discussion (debrief)	Skill Practice	Role-play	Kinesthetic Activities
Discussion (brainstorm)	Language/Vocabulary Exercises	Writing	Visual Display
Discussion (other)	Songs	Didactic Instruction	Video
Poem	Meditation/visualization	Computer App	Teacher Choice

For a more detailed description of each instructional method, please refer to Chapter 1 of the guide.

Here are some questions to consider:

- Are there certain instructional methods that have been more/less effective for either students or instructors at your school/organization?
- Are there any instructional methods that you would like to introduce or see more of relative to current instructional methods?
- What instructional methods are most developmentally appropriate for your students?

List the instructional methods that you would like to prioritize in the left-hand column below. If you do not have a strong preference or would like to find a program that employs a variety of instructional methods, indicate "variety" below. If there are any instructional methods you would prefer not to employ, write the method(s) below with a note or asterisk alongside.

Now that you have filled in your instructional methods priorities, please use Table 2 in Chapter 5 of the guide to find programs to meet these needs. Write the names of programs that fit the criteria in the right-hand column below.

Instructional Methods	Programs
Example: Songs	*Before the Bullying, Conscious Discipline, Second Step, Too Good for Violence*

To learn more about the programs in your list, please refer to the program snapshots and more in-depth program profiles in Chapter 6 of the guide.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The chart below lists components and features that are common across different programs. Consider your priorities and the list above to determine if there are any program components that are relevant to your school or organization.

Please circle or highlight the program components that are important to your school/organization:

PROGRAM COMPONENTS		
Classroom Activities Beyond Core Lessons	Professional Development & Training	Family Engagement
Climate & Culture Supports	Support for Implementation	Community Engagement
Applications to Out-of-School Time	Tools to Assess Program Outcomes	Equitable & Inclusive Education
Program Flexibility & Fit	Tools to Assess Implementation	

For a more detailed description of each component, please refer to Chapter 1 of the guide.

Here are some questions to consider:

- Are there certain program components that you might want to incorporate into your school or organization's culture or value system? (e.g., school climate, family engagement, etc.)
- Are there any program components that you would like to introduce or see more of relative to current practices?
- What program components are most culturally relevant for your students and families?

Now that you have filled in your program component priorities, please use Table 3 in Chapter 5 the guide to find programs that align with your needs. Use the table below to create a list of programs that fit the criteria.

Program Components	Programs
Example: Community Engagement	*Caring School Community, Girls on the Run, Lions Quest, MindUP*

To learn more about the programs in your list, please refer to the program snapshots and more in-depth program profiles in Chapter 6 of the guide.

STEP 3: IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Complete this step to visualize what implementation will look like at your school or organization. Start by considering the opportunities and restrictions in time and structure, followed by considerations for leadership and training.

TIME AND STRUCTURE

Do you have any schedule or timing opportunities/constraints that would influence SEL programming? Please write major considerations here:

_____

_____

How many lessons per week will you aim to implement? What are the best days and times for SEL programming?

_____

How might you integrate SEL programming across the school? Examples include advisory periods, P.E./health or wellness classes, language arts classrooms, or using strategies and activities across all classes.

_____

How might you integrate SEL programming into academic time, playground time, or other specific place (e.g., classrooms, gym) in your setting?

_____

LEADERSHIP AND TRAINING

Who are the stakeholders involved in both selecting and implementing new SEL programming?

_____

Who will assume leadership over the program, who will be the school or organization's "point person," and who will be part of any SEL team or committee?

_____

Who will implement the program?

_____

What kind of training will this require? What degree of training and training schedule would work best for your setting?

_____

STEP 4: CHOOSE A PROGRAM

Now that you have identified several potential programs, it's time to select one. Start with programs that appear more than once on your lists and read through the program snapshots and in-depth profiles in Chapter 6 of the guide to learn more about the programs.

Consider making brief notes in the table below, including standout components, pros/cons, or anything else that might help you look across programs and select the best fit. Keep in mind your priorities, including areas of need, time and structure, training, cost, evidence of effectiveness, specific population, etc.

Program Options	Benefits	Drawbacks
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Once you have finished reviewing and annotating the programs, go back to the first page of this worksheet and review your focus questions, needs and goals, as well as your top considerations. Out of the available options, which program best suits your specific needs?

_____