

Social Emotional Learning in Afterschool

A guide to implementing
quality SEL programming in
your out-of-school time program

ACTNOW!
Afterschool for Children and Teens

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THIS GUIDE?¹

ACT Now wrote this guide to help providers learn more about Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and to assist in the planning and implementation of SEL in afterschool. In this guide, you will find resources and information to assist with learning about SEL, planning for implementation, selecting SEL curriculum and activities, training staff in SEL, assessing your program's implementation of SEL, and assessing youth SEL outcomes.



ACTNOW!
Afterschool for Children and Teens
CONTACT INFORMATION

Susan Stanton	Network Lead	StantonS@actnowillinois.org
Emma Vibber	Quality & Professional Development Specialist	VibberE@actnowillinois.org
Faith Knocke	Youth Development Associate	KnockeF@actnowillinois.org

Why SEL in Afterschool?

Afterschool programs offer a variety of learning experiences and opportunities for youth, including opportunities for youth to develop important life skills. These skills have been referred to as “21st century skills” or “soft skills” but are all considered a part of social-emotional learning (SEL). SEL is a broad term used to encompass an array of skills such as critical-thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL 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.”²

Another important aspect to consider are social-emotional frameworks. SEL frameworks can help afterschool providers select key competencies to include in their program plan. CASEL has designed an SEL framework that is comprised of 5 social-emotional key skills or competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. This is not the only research-based framework that is available. The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, Forum for Youth Investment, and Every Hour Counts have all developed their own set of SEL competencies and have all at some point been integrated into SEL curriculum. Each framework varies, but they do have commonalities in what skills they teach youth:

- **Intrinsic motivation** (initiative, persistence, self-direction)
- **Critical-thinking skills** (problem-solving, metacognitive, reasoning, and judgment skills)
- **Relational skills** (communication, cooperation, empathy)
- **Emotional self-regulation** (impulse control, stress management, behavior)
- **Self-concept** (knowing one’s own strengths and limitations, belief in one’s ability to succeed, belief that competence grows with effort)



Many afterschool providers already promote social-emotional learning in many ways such as through sports or mentorships, and many are adopting more formalized SEL practices because they are linked to positive youth outcomes. Academic performance of students exposed to SEL practices is on average 13 percentile points higher than their non-SEL peers.³ Afterschool programs that build social and emotional skills measured significant improvement in grades, test scores, attachment to school, and positive social behaviors.⁴ They also reduce problem behaviors – aggression, non-compliance, and misconduct – as well as drug use.⁵ Many afterschool providers seek to integrate SEL practices into their programs to gain positive outcomes, but to achieve that, providers must implement SEL effectively.

Implementation matters when it comes to achieving the positive effects of SEL. Research correlates disorganized implementation of SEL practices to negative effects in youth and staff.⁶ Thus, providers must plan and assess SEL programming carefully in order to achieve the best results for youth. To improve youths’ personal and social skills, programs must devote sufficient time to skill enhancement, be explicit about what they wish to achieve, use activities that are coordinated and sequenced to achieve their purpose, and require active involvement on the part of participants.



To help get you started, the following are some resources to read in order to learn more about SEL and gain a better foundation.

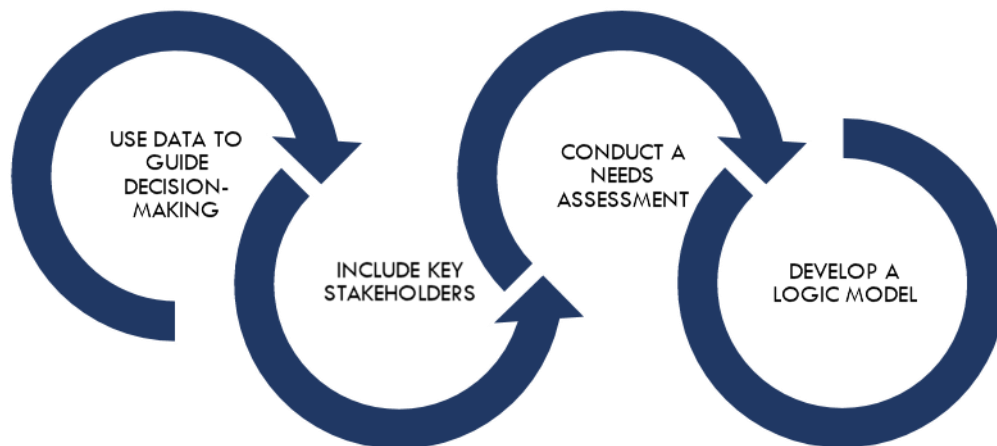
Tool	Organization	Description	Pricing
Navigating SEL from the Inside Out	Wallace Foundation	Provides information on in and out-of-school SEL, including background information, resources, and profiles for 25 programs	The report is free but the resources they mention vary in price
Ready for Work?: How Afterschool Programs Can Support Employability Through Social and Emotional Learning	American Institutes for Research	Details the relationship between SEL and employability with recommendations for practitioners	Free

Planning

Implementing SEL practices can be transformational for youth, but only when implemented in an intentional and structured manner. This section will discuss best practices when planning to implement SEL practices.

When implementing SEL, the first step is to **use data to guide the decision-making** process. This may include an asset map, any community climate data, staff surveys, or qualitative data. The second step is to **include key stakeholders** in making decisions such as teachers, families, school leaders, and students about their vision for SEL and the specific needs they hope to address.

The planning process can look differently depending on the program. Therefore, the third step is to conduct a **resources and needs assessment** to evaluate and understand community needs. This will help providers identify existing SEL programs and practices, any gaps within the program, and resources that may be useful to maximize impact.



There are a lot of great resources out there to help you learn about SEL and plan to implement it in your programs. The following are some FREE resources to help in this work.

Tool	Organization	Description
Resource and Needs Assessment	CASEL	Helps school districts identify existing SEL activities, resources, and needs
The In-School and Afterschool Social Emotional Learning Connection	American Institutes for Research	Designed to help afterschool program staff and school staff identify ways to collaborate to support social and emotional skill building

The needs assessment informs the development of a vision and plan. A **logic model** is recommended as a fourth step to help define how you will work towards that vision. Many afterschool providers develop a logic model to specify program goals, activities that will help achieve those goals, and how they will measure goal attainment. Logic models are also used as a guide to monitor the program to promote continuous improvement.

The Basic Anatomy of a Logic Model



The following are resources to help you with creating an SEL logic model.

Resource	Organization	Description
Logic Model Development Guide	W.K. Kellogg Foundation	Provides a guide to creating a logic model but is not specific to SEL
Afterschool Evaluation 101	Harvard Family Research Project	A primer on evaluation in afterschool with a section on creating logic models (not specific to SEL)
Logic Model Worksheet	Harvard Family Research Project	A worksheet to help create a logic model for afterschool programs, but not specific to SEL
Example of Afterschool SEL Logic Model	Youth Thrive	An example afterschool logic model focused on emotional/mental health and wellness

Selecting SEL Curriculum and Activities

Once you have started planning for SEL, you may want to explore adopting SEL curriculum. Many afterschool providers adopt in-school SEL curriculum because it provides consistency and additional exposure to the SEL skills taught during the school day. However, programs may also decide to adopt something specific to the out-of-school time context.

There is not a one-size-fits-all option for SEL, thus programs will still need to evaluate and analyze the needs of all youth. Outside of looking for set curricula, incorporating SEL activities and daily check-ins can go a long way in helping to improve youth's SEL skills. **On the following pages will find resources to help incorporate SEL curriculum and activities into your program.**

Tool	Organization	Description	Grades	Curriculum	Activities	Cost
One Circle Curriculum	One Circle Foundation	Curriculum differentiated by gender including facilitator notes, activities, and themes	4-12	X	X	Activity Guides (booklets on specific topics) range from \$100-\$150 Curriculum sets range from \$1,000-\$2,500
Restorative Justice Training: Peace Circles	Student Peace Alliance	A guide to facilitating peace circles, which emphasize healing and learning through a collective group process aiming to repair harm done and assign responsibility by talking through the problem	4-12	X		Free
SPARKS for Schools and Groups	SPARKS	Content and activities that address academic success, emotional competency, self-efficacy skills, communication skills, conflict resolution skills, and connectedness to family/school/community	K-12	X		Membership options range from \$395-\$595; there are also facilitator virtual trainings for \$695-\$1,495
Parent Cafés	Be Strong Families	Physically and emotionally safe spaces where parents and caregivers talk about the challenges and victories of raising a family through self-reflection and peer-to-peer learning	Parents		X	Individuals may purchase "Parent Café in a Box" which are tools and questions that can be used for these group sessions - priced at \$36
12 Prompts for SEL Summer Learning	WINGS for Kids	Prompts for incorporating SEL into any activity or reading assignment	K-5		X	Free

Tool	Organization	Description	Grades	Curriculum	Activities	Cost
Random Acts of Kindness	Random Acts of Kindness Foundation	Curriculum to help teachers develop a kindness project or kindness club that includes SEL skills	K-8	X		Free
Sanford Harmony	National University	Research-based SEL everyday practices, lessons, and activities (focused more on the school day)	PreK-6	X	X	Free
Do-It-Yourself SEL Activity Kit	WINGS for Kids	A free do-it-yourself kit to incorporate SEL in any program and parent tips to encourage at-home practices of SEL skills	K-5		X	Free
SEL Toolkit	ACT for Youth	SEL toolkit to promote self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making through activities and links to other sources	K-12 (grade level depends on each resource)		X	Free
Second Step	Second Step	SEL curriculum kits (CDs, posters, activities, cards, and notebooks) that focuses on students, parents, and the community	Serves PreK-8 for school day and K-5 out-of-school-time	X	X	Individual materials (i.e. posters) can range anywhere from \$15-\$75 Kits, bundles, and licenses can range anywhere from \$200-\$8,000
Botvin	National Health Promotion Associates	An evidence-based substance abuse and violence prevention program for schools and communities with kits	K-12	X		Curriculum sets range from \$200-\$800 Individual pieces or materials from the sets can range from \$50-\$600

Professional Development



After learning about SEL and deciding how you will implement SEL, it is important that your staff feels equipped to conduct this work.

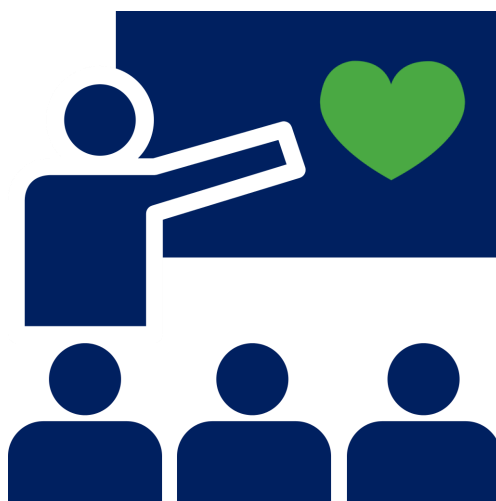
The following is a list of FREE resources to help in training your staff in SEL.

Tool	Organization	Type	Description
Social Emotional Learning in Practice: A Toolkit of Practical Strategies and Resources	University of Minnesota Extension: Center for Youth Development	Toolkit	A toolkit to assist with implementing SEL, including ways to train staff, sample activities, and ideas for measuring effectiveness
SEL Online Education Module	State of Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction	Online Training	10 hours of self-directed online learning modules to assist schools in implementing SEL
iSEL: Introduction to Social Emotional Learning	The Emotional Intelligence Network	Online Training	A set of six online learning modules with four to five units each designed to assist educators in learning about, implementing, and sustaining SEL
InspirED	The Emotional Intelligence Network	Toolkit	A toolkit to assist educators in practicing and applying SEL strategies
SEL Blog and Videos	Edutopia	Blogs/Videos	Blogs and videos breaking down various aspects of SEL programming

You might also find SEL **courses and workshops** at your local college or university. Many universities offer social-emotional learning certification courses both online and in-person.

The following courses are also available for a fee.

Tool	Organization	Description	Type	Pricing
Social-Emotional Learning and Character Development Certificate Program	Rutgers School of Arts and Science	Three non-credit online courses to earn a certificate in Social-Emotional Learning and Character Development in Schools and After-School Programs	Online Trainings	\$240
SEL Trainings in Chicago	SEL Chicago	Workshops, courses, coaching, and training for parents, educators, and providers on SEL	In-Person Trainings	\$325-\$425
SEL On Demand In-Person and Online Trainings	The California School-Age Consortium (CalSAC)	Trainings for staff and providers for before and after school programs on SEL	Online and In-Person Training	Free or \$35/year per person for extended resources



Continuous Quality Improvement

After selecting which SEL competencies to implement and choosing a curriculum, providers must decide how they will implement a system of continuous improvement to measure the effectiveness of SEL implementation. There are various tools available to evaluate program quality. Choosing an assessment will depend on the vision and plan that was established and the availability of tools.

The following are **FREE** resources to assist in assessing your program's usage of SEL.

Tool	Organization	Description
Social and Emotional Learning Practices	American Institutes for Research	Self-assessment tool to assist afterschool staff with reflecting and action planning for SEL practices
Assessing Social and Emotional Instruction and Competencies: A Tool for Teachers	Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at American Institutes for Research	Self-assessment tool to assist teachers in learning SEL competencies, assessing on their practices, and action planning for improvement
SEL Strengths Builder Method	Preparing Youth to Thrive (Susan Crown Exchange and the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality)	Self-Assessment tool for afterschool professionals to assess their SEL curriculum, practices, and youth skills
District Resource Center	CASEL	A framework for leaders and educators in school districts that offers guidance and resources to help organize, implement, and continuously improve SEL

SEL Youth Outcomes Tools

After learning about SEL, implementing it, and assessing your program quality, you may also want to assess youth outcomes in SEL. American Institutes for Research (AIR) provides a [brief](#) to help providers learn about the landscape of assessing social and emotional competencies of youth. Discussed are considerations of whether or not assessment is the right move, how rigorous that assessment should be, and the burden, benefits, and ethics of assessment.

AIR's [decision tree](#) helps providers think about the type of assessment that will be used and how it will be used to evaluate students' social and emotional knowledge, attitudes, and skills. AIR's [Tools Index](#) provides a list of the selected outcomes tools identified by AIR for social and emotional learning.



References

1. Thank you to all those who contributed to this toolkit, including former ACT Now Interns Isela Luna, Kathleen Meis, and Olivia Hill; ACT Now staff Susan Stanton, Faith Knocke, and Emma Vibber; ACT Now members that submitted resources from our survey; and the ACT Now Professional Development and Quality Assurance, Outcomes, and Evaluation Committee.
2. CASEL. (n.d.). *What is SEL?* Retrieved from <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>.
3. Taylor, R. D., Oberle, E. , Durlak, J. A. & Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Promoting positive youth development through school-based social and emotional learning interventions: A meta-analysis of follow-up effects. *Child Development*, 88: 1156-1171.
4. Durlak, J.A. & Weissberg, R.P. (2007). *The impact of afterschool programs that promote personal and social skills*. Retrieved from <https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/PDF-1-the-impact-of-after-school-programs-that-promote-personal-and-social-skills-executive-summary.pdf>.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Durlak J.A. & Dupre, E.P. (2008). Implementation matters: A review of research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors affecting implementation. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 41(3-4), 327-35.

GLOSSARY OR RESOURCE LINKS

Tool	Description	Link
<u>Navigating SEL from the Inside Out</u>	Provides information on in and out-of-school SEL, including background information, resources, and profiles for 25 programs	https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Navigating-Social-and-Emotional-Learning-from-the-Inside-Out.pdf
<u>Ready for Work?: How Afterschool Programs Can Support Employability Through Social and Emotional Learning</u>	Details the relationship between SEL and employability with recommendations for practitioners	https://www.air.org/resource/ready-work-how-afterschool-programs-can-support-employability-through-social-and-emotional
<u>Resource and Needs Assessment</u>	Helps school districts identify existing SEL activities, resources, and needs	https://drc.casel.org/resources-by-topic/page/2/?topic=needs-and-resources-assessment
<u>The In-School and Afterschool Social Emotional Learning Connection</u>	Designed to help afterschool program staff and school staff identify ways to collaborate to support social and emotional skill building	https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/In-School-Out-of-School-SEL-Connection-rev.pdf
<u>Logic Model Development Guide</u>	Provides a guide to creating a logic model but is not specific to SEL	https://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide
<u>Afterschool Evaluation 101</u>	A primer on evaluation in afterschool with a section on creating logic models (not specific to SEL)	http://www.hfpg.org/files/2214/5194/1686/Afterschool.Eval101-120911-FINAL.pdf
<u>Logic Model Worksheet</u>	A worksheet to help create a logic model for afterschool programs, but not specific to SEL	http://youthtoday.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2015/01/Learning-From-Logic-Models-in-Out-of-School-Time-Worksheet.pdf
<u>Example of Afterschool SEL Logic Model</u>	An example afterschool logic model focused on emotional/mental health and wellness	http://www.youth-thrive.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Emotional-and-Mental-Health-and-Wellness-Logic-Model.pdf
<u>One Circle Curriculum</u>	Curriculum differentiated by gender including facilitator notes, activities, and themes	https://onecirclefoundation.org/how_it_works.aspx
<u>Restorative Justice Training: Peace Circles</u>	A guide to facilitating peace circles, which emphasize healing and learning through a collective group process aiming to repair harm done and assign responsibility by talking through the problem	http://www.studentpeacealliance.org/uploads/2/9/4/4/29446231/peace_circles-3.pdf
<u>SPARKS for Schools and Groups</u>	Content and activities that address academic success, emotional competency, self-efficacy skills, communication skills, conflict resolution skills, and connectedness to family/school/community	https://sparkcurriculum.org/schools-group-training/

GLOSSARY OR RESOURCE LINKS

Tool	Description	Link
<u>Parent Cafés</u>	Physically and emotionally safe spaces where parents and caregivers talk about the challenges and victories of raising a family through self-reflection and peer-to-peer learning	https://www.beststrongfamilies.org/parent-cafes
<u>12 Prompts for SEL Summer Learning</u>	Prompts for incorporating SEL into any activity or reading assignment	https://www.wingsforkids.org/12-prompts-for-social-emotional-summer-learning/
<u>Random Acts of Kindness</u>	Curriculum to help teachers develop a kindness project or kindness club that includes SEL skills	https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/for-educators
<u>Sanford Harmony</u>	Research-based SEL everyday practices, lessons, and activities (focused more on the school day)	https://www.sanfordharmony.org/
<u>Do-It-Yourself SEL Activity Kit</u>	A free do-it-yourself kit to incorporate SEL in any program and parent tips to encourage at-home practices of SEL skills	https://www.wingsforkids.org/get-involved/resources-for-parents/diy-for-parents/
<u>SEL Toolkit</u>	SEL toolkit to promote self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making through activities and links to other sources	http://actforyouth.net/youth_development/professionals/sel/
<u>Second Step</u>	SEL curriculum kits (CDs, posters, activities, cards, and notebooks) that focuses on students, parents, and the community	https://www.secondstep.org/
<u>Botvin</u>	An evidence-based substance abuse and violence prevention program for schools and communities with kits	https://www.lifeskillstraining.com/
<u>Social Emotional Learning in Practice: A Toolkit of Practical Strategies and Resources</u>	A toolkit to assist with implementing SEL, including ways to train staff, sample activities, and ideas for measuring effectiveness	https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/195764/sel-toolkit.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
<u>SEL Online Education Module</u>	10 hours of self-directed online learning modules to assist schools in implementing SEL	http://www.k12.wa.us/StudentSupport/SEL/OnlineModule.aspx
<u>iSEL: Introduction to Social Emotional Learning</u>	A set of six online learning modules with four to five units each designed to assist educators in learning about, implementing, and sustaining SEL	https://eq.org/learn/courses/isel/
<u>InspirED</u>	A toolkit to assist educators in practicing and applying SEL strategies	https://eq.org/learn/courses/inspired/

GLOSSARY OR RESOURCE LINKS

Tool	Description	Link
SEL Blog and Videos	Blogs and videos breaking down various aspects of SEL programming	https://www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning
Social-Emotional Learning and Character Development Certificate Program	Three non-credit online courses to earn a certificate in Social-Emotional Learning and Character Development in Schools and After-School Programs	https://psych.rutgers.edu/sel
SEL Trainings in Chicago	Workshops, courses, coaching, and training for parents, educators, and providers on SEL	https://selchicago.com/
SEL On Demand In-Person and Online Trainings	Trainings for staff and providers for before and after school programs on SEL	https://www.calsac.org/
Social and Emotional Learning Practices	Self-assessment tool to assist afterschool staff with reflecting and action planning for SEL practices	https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Social-Emotional-Learning-Afterschool-Toolkit-Sept-2015.pdf
Assessing Social and Emotional Instruction and Competencies: A Tool for Teachers	Self-assessment tool to assist teachers in learning SEL competencies, assessing on their practices, and action planning for improvement	https://gtlcenter.org/products-resources/self-assessing-social-and-emotional-instruction-and-competencies-tool-teachers
SEL Strengths Builder Method	Self-Assessment tool for afterschool professionals to assess their SEL curriculum, practices, and youth skills	https://www.selpractices.org/curriculum_package/sel-strengths-builder-method
District Resource Center	A framework for leaders and educators in school districts that offers guidance and resources to help organize, implement, and continuously improve SEL	https://drc.casel.org/how-it-works/
AIR SEL Brief	A brief regarding how to assess social and emotional learning competencies	https://www.air.org/resource/are-schools-ready-assess-social-and-emotional-development
AIR Decision Tree	A guide to finding the right type of assessment for your program	https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/AIR%20Ready%20to%20Assess_THINK.pdf
AIR Tools Index	An archive of SEL assessment tools	https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/AIR%20Ready%20to%20Assess_ACT_rev.pdf



ACTNOW!
Afterschool for Children and Teens