



DAVID P. WEIKART
CENTER FOR YOUTH
PROGRAM QUALITY

Essentials of Quality Social Emotional Learning Practice

Participant Notebook

Name: _____



Improving & Aligning
Policies

About the Forum

The Forum for Youth Investment provides products and services to help leaders improve partnerships, policies and practices to change the odds so all young people are ready for college, work and life. These products and services are based on best practices in youth development and on our experience working with hundreds of communities around the country since our founding in 1998.



Planning and Partnering
for Impact

About the Forum's Weikart Center

David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality is a leader in empowering education and human service leaders to adapt, implement and scale best-in-class, research-validated quality improvement systems to advance child and youth development. Training and technical assistance in quality improvement system design, effective performance data and lower stakes accountability has helped OST networks across the country be successful, scale-able and sustainable. The Weikart Center is a critical part of the Forum for Youth Investment's overall effort to build leadership capacity to advance readiness and equity.



Strengthening Practices
and Programs

8 ESSENTIALS of Quality SEL Practices/CENTRAL IDEAS

1. SEL is rooted in **YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**.

Doing SEL is sometimes talked about as attending to the development of the “whole child,” not just their learning of academic content or the acquisition of a particular skill we are responsible for teaching them. To do so requires an understanding of youth development in the social, emotional, and cognitive realms. SEL is a natural extension of the positive youth development focus that was advocated in 2002 by the National Research Council’s publication *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*.

2. Discrete, identifiable, improvable **STAFF PRACTICES MATTER** for quality SEL programs.

SEL skill development can be supported by focusing on key developmental experiences for youth and intentional practices that can be taught and coached to as part of a quality improvement system. Weikart has created the SEL Program Quality Assessment tool to support programs in right-stakes program assessment focused on understanding and measuring their implementation of these more focused SEL standards for practice.

3. **SEL READINESS** requires a great deal more than just interest.

Readiness is an important consideration in taking on SEL, as doing it well requires additional supports at the organization, network, and policy levels. Quality PYD, as measured by the Youth and School-Age PQAs, lays a strong foundation for quality SEL practice. If you are doing PYD well, you are contributing to SEL, perhaps better than by taking on SEL before you are ready to do so.

4. **SUPPORT FOR STAFF’S** professional and personal (SEL) development is critical.

Support for Staff from managers, organizations, and networks must include attention to staff’s own SEL competencies as well as to their professional development to build skills that support SEL in youth. In keeping with parallel process, this means that managers must also have some SEL savvy of their own to coach and model for their staff.

5. Creating **SAFE SPACE & BELONGING** remains foundational for SEL practice.

Creating Safe Spaces where youth can learn and develop remains foundational to supporting youth, and it helps to foster a sense of belonging. SEL expands on the importance of safety in two ways.. SEL supports psychological safety, helping youth feel safe to be themselves. It also helps them risk failing or making mistakes as they engage in the complex tasks that are necessary for social and emotional development to occur. The number of places where young people can and should feel safe—and thus could be supported in their development—includes far more than the school and OST programs.

6. **INTENTIONAL SEQUENCING** of both SEL and activity-based content is necessary.

The Thrive Guide spelled out the importance of sequencing of both specific projects (information or activities in relation to the content of the youth program) and SEL (content and experiences related to acquiring SEL skills). Sequenced content is at the heart of curriculum, and a variety of SEL curricula are available. While explicit “SEL curricula” may be helpful in the hands of well-trained staff who can implement it using staff practices described in the Thrive Guide, this is not what the Thrive Guide meant. In fact, staff with the skills to use these practices (and in contexts that support them in doing so) can sequence SEL content into whatever curriculum or activities you are using that taps into the interests and motivation of youth.

7. Strong relationships provide a context for staff to use **RESPONSIVE PRACTICES**.

Learning is profoundly social, and relationships—both peer-to-peer and youth-adult—support youth in learning wherever they are. For adults in youth programs, the relationships they have with the youth also provide them knowledge about their relative level of development. This awareness allows staff to structure activities appropriately for the youth, but also to coach, model, scaffold, and facilitate in real time as youth engage, struggle, and persevere through the activities.

8. An explicit and transparent **EQUITY LENS** is necessary to ensure that SEL rectifies rather than recreates social inequities.

As with many positive developments in human services and education, the embrace of SEL, with its focus on individual youth skill and competency development, can lead to stigmatization of youth as deficient if they don't demonstrate those skills. It is vital to approach SEL within a broader social, political, and cultural context, with an analysis of power, privilege, and oppression dynamics. Without this contextual analysis, SEL efforts in communities of color and poor communities keep the focus on individual deficits instead of attending to the structural mechanisms that create these disparities. Having an explicit equity lens in SEL work with young people helps us do the work of getting youth ready while also addressing barriers in the community due to racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of systemic oppression. It also creates an exciting context for youth voice and agency in critically analyzing these structures and taking action to address them.

EMOTION MANAGEMENT
Abilities to be aware of and constructively handle both positive and challenging emotions.



Key youth experiences

- Youth experience a range of positive and negative emotions in a safe context.
 - Youth have opportunities to practice and develop healthy and functional emotion skills.
- Staff practices**
- Staff create and adjust the structure of daily activities to accommodate youth's processing of emotion.
 - Staff model healthy emotion strategies within the context of caring, mutually-respectful relationships with youth.
 - Staff provide coaching to youth about handling and learning from their ongoing emotional experiences.

EMPATHY
Relating to others with acceptance, understanding, and sensitivity to their diverse perspectives and experiences.



Key youth experiences

- Youth explore social structure and power in relation to themselves and others.
- Youth share their stories and listen to the stories of others.
- Youth practice relating to others with acceptance and understanding.

Staff practices

- Staff provide programs with appropriate structure for sharing experience and promoting equity.
- Staff model empathy skills with youth.

TEAMWORK
Abilities to collaborate and coordinate action with others.



Key youth experiences

- Youth develop group cohesion and trust.
- Youth participate in successful collaboration.
- Youth manage challenges to creating and maintaining effective working relationships.

Staff practices

- Staff provide programs with norms and structure.
- Staff model teamwork skills with youth.
- Staff facilitate or intervene as needed to foster or sustain youth-led group dynamics and successful collaboration.

RESPONSIBILITY
Dispositions and abilities to reliably meet commitments and fulfill obligations of challenging roles.



Key youth experiences

- Youth take on roles and obligations within program activities.
- Youth encounter difficult demands.
- Youth draw on resources to fulfill challenging roles and internalize accomplishment.

Staff practices

- Staff provide structured but open-ended roles for youth.
- Staff model and fulfill their own roles.
- Staff promote high expectations, respect youth's ownership of their roles, and provide help only as needed.

INITIATIVE
Capacities to take action, sustain motivation, and persevere through challenge toward an identified goal.



Key youth experiences

- Youth set ambitious and realistic goals.
- Youth develop and sustain motivation by doing work that matters to them.
- Youth have experiences persevering through the ups and downs of difficult work.

Staff practices

- Staff provide ongoing assistance to help youth develop motivation within the work.
- Staff encourage youth to persist through challenging work, making sure that the effort behind youth's achievement is recognized.

PROBLEM SOLVING
Abilities to plan, strategize, and implement complex tasks.



Key youth experiences

- Youth engage in projects that involve organizing actions over time.
- Youth learn through cycles of strategic planning, execution, responding to emergent problems, trial and error, and reflection on outcomes.
- Youth reflect on how outcomes of their work provide information that helps build and verify youth skills.

Staff practices

- Staff provide sufficient structure to youth-driven projects.
- Staff create opportunities for youth to observe models of successful work.
- Staff provide assistance, as needed, to help youth learn and solve problems on their own.
- Staff offer youth opportunities for reflection on project outcomes.

Notes and Doodles

What Does SEL Look Like in Youth?

Picture a young person who successfully completes your SEL program.

- What do you see?

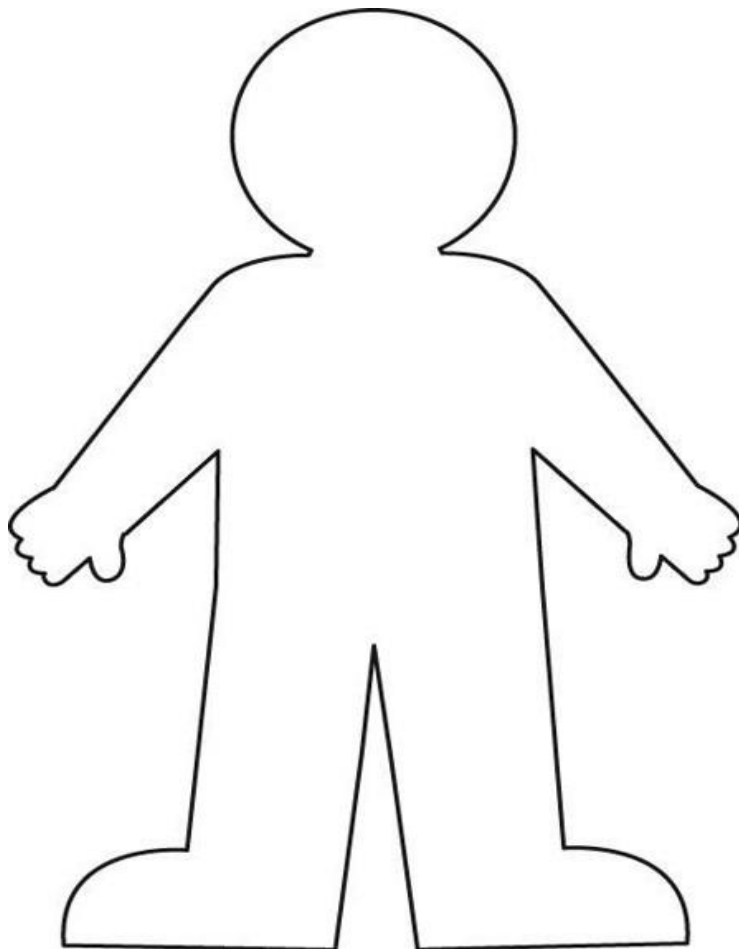
- How do they sound?

- What do they say?

- Where are they found?

- How do they behave?

- What can they do?



Unpacking the Essentials

How does this SEL Essential contribute to the young person you sketched?

What resonates with you about this SEL Essential?

What connections can you make between it and what you do with SEL already?

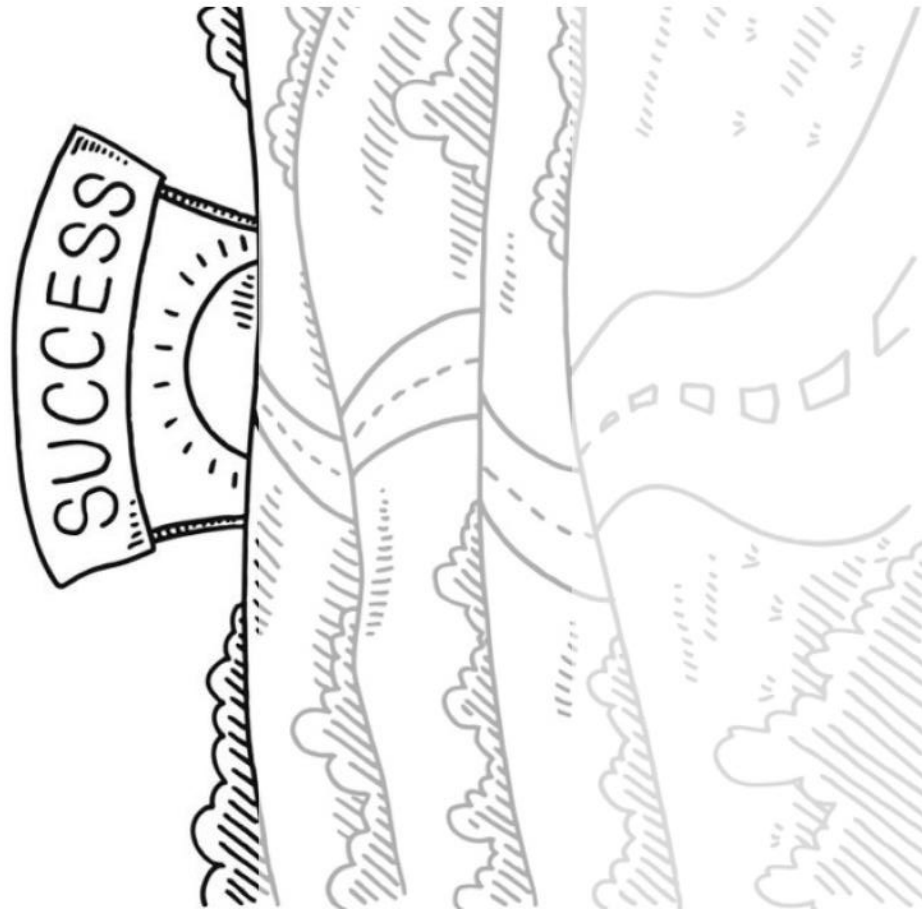
Reflection Questions

1. One aspect of the “What Does SEL Look Like” activity that resonates with me is...

2. Which of the 8 essentials do you want to explore more? Why?

3. How will you overcome potential challenges with implementing (or continuing to implement) quality SEL practices?

SEL Journey Mapping



Destination

What is your current arrival point for SEL work?

Waypoint

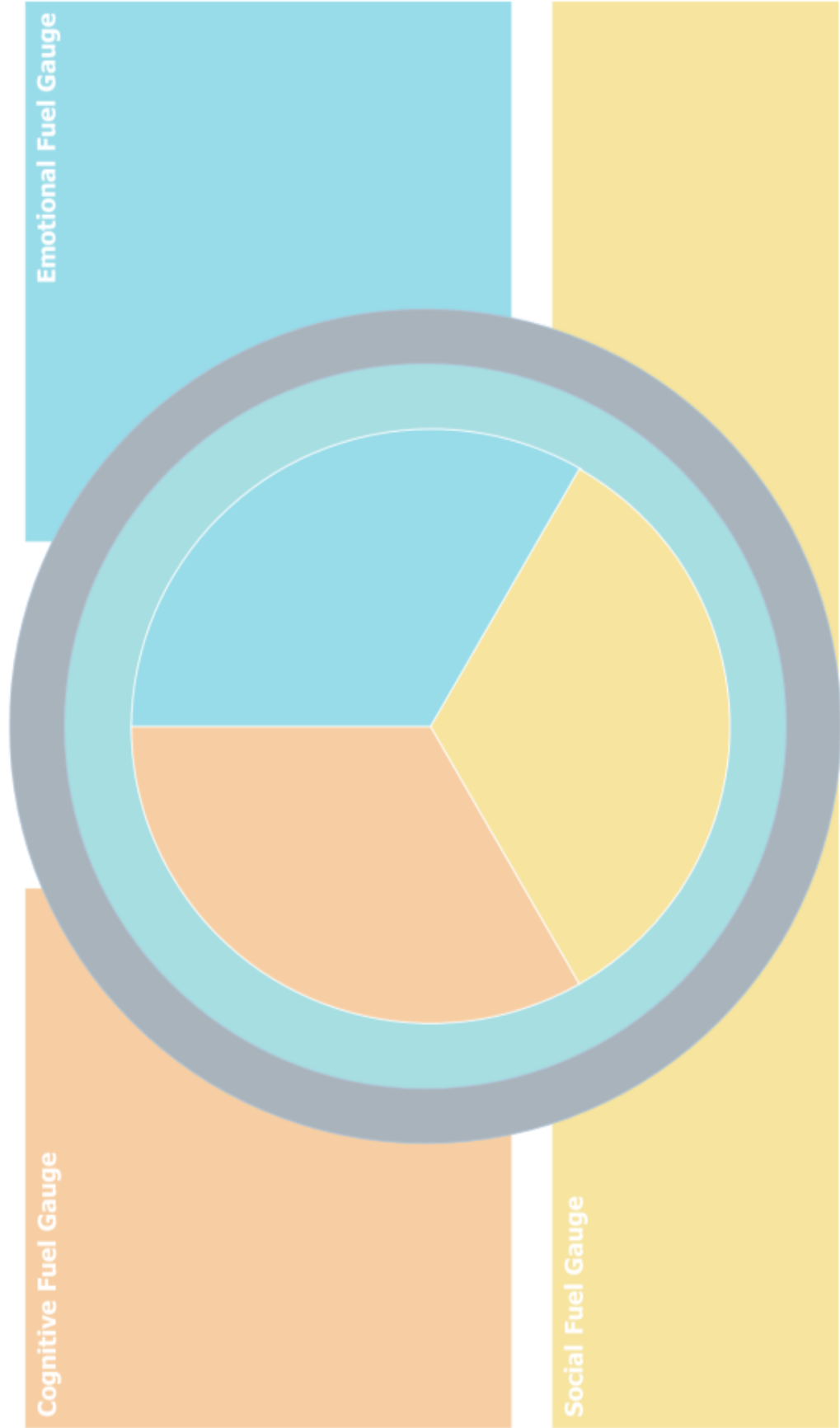
What does it look like where you are now?

Rearview

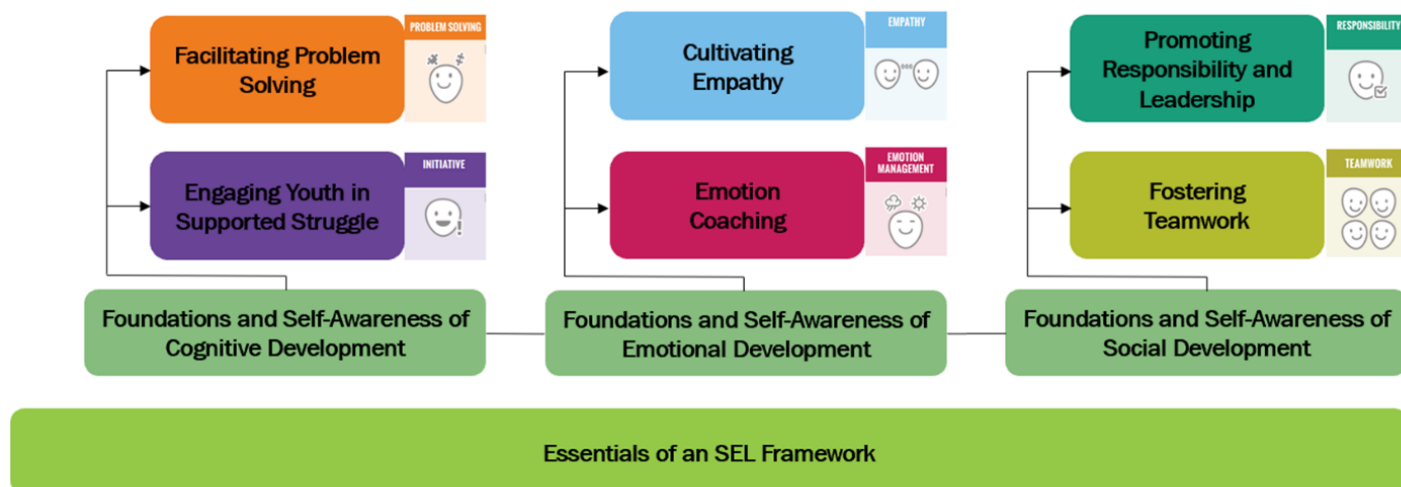
Where have you been on your SEL Journey?

Your SEL Fuel Gauge

In each of the three sections below, reflect on what skills and resources you already have to continue on your SEL journey as well as the skills and resources you need to get to your destination.



Social Emotional Learning Methods Sequence with *Preparing Youth to Thrive* Domains



Social Emotional Learning Pyramid of Program Quality with SEL PQA Scales



Crosswalk of Weikart Center's SEL Resources and Supports

<i>Preparing Youth to Thrive</i>	Youth Work Methods	SEL Methods	SEL PQA
			ENGAGING ENVIRONMENT
Problem Solving	Active Learning	Facilitating Problem Solving	Furthering Learning
			Support connections to previous knowledge
			Link examples to principles
			Encourage extending knowledge
			Encourage logical reasoning
Initiative	Youth Voice		Guide discovery
			Supporting Youth Interests
			Provide open-ended choice
			Provide multiple opportunities for choice
			Support creativity
Problem Solving, Initiative	Planning and Reflection	Facilitating Problem Solving	Supporting Plans and Goals
			Set up planning opportunities
			Ensure young people record or represent plans
			Facilitate monitoring progress toward goal
			Support problem-solving alternatives
			INTERACTIVE ENVIRONMENT
Teamwork	Cooperative Learning	Fostering Teamwork	Fostering Teamwork
			Promote active collaboration
			Establish shared goals
			Provide group-process opportunities
Responsibility	Youth Voice	Promoting Responsibility & Leadership	Promoting Responsibility and Leadership
			Assign responsibility for tasks
			Support carrying out responsibilities independently
			Provide mentoring opportunities
			Provide leadership opportunities
Empathy	Building Community	Cultivating Empathy	Provide opportunities to present
			Cultivating Empathy
			Structure activity for sharing and listening
			Encourage understanding other's emotions
			Structure activities for showing kindness
			SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT
Management Safe Space (Curriculum Feature)	Reframing Conflict	Emotion Coaching	Emotion Coaching
			Acknowledge emotions
			Support young people to name emotions
			Discuss constructive handling
			Discuss emotion causes
Responsibility	Active Learning, Intro to Active Participatory Approach	Engaging Youth in Supported Struggle	Scaffolding Learning
			Break task into steps
			Model skills
			Encourage young people to improve performance
			Monitor challenge level
Initiative	Ask-Listen-Encourage	Engaging Youth in Supported Struggle	Fostering Growth Mindset
			Guide young people to self-correct
			Use non-evaluative language
			Attribute achievement to effort
Safe Space (Curriculum Features)			Creating Safe Spaces
	Building Community, Reframing Conflict	Fostering Teamwork	Foster positive emotional climate
	Building Community,	Fostering Teamwork	Convey warmth and respect
	Structure & Clear Limits Reframing Conflict	Cultivating Empathy	Provide support for safe space
	Building Community	Cultivating Empathy	Demonstrate positive group management style
			Demonstrate mutual accountability
			Show active inclusion