



Getting Started with Harmony SEL

Best Practices for School Leaders in Implementing Social and Emotional Learning Programs

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Social and emotional learning (SEL) has been established by practitioners and researchers as an essential ingredient of PreK–12 students' development as learners and future citizens. However, key implementation challenges often occur as schools attempt to integrate SEL programming into their school structure. Lack of instructional time, inadequate implementation support, and limited common knowledge of SEL practices among teachers and support staff are all common challenges that schools face. In this brief, readers, particularly school leaders and principals, will learn practical, evidence-based information about the importance and uses of SEL. Building on work presented in an earlier brief aimed at classroom teachers (Reilly, Yoder, Ross, et al., 2021), here, we specifically detail the best practices that school leaders should employ in supporting schoolwide SEL and implementation of SEL programs and practices. We give particular attention to strategies and research support related to Harmony, an evidence-based SEL program housed at National University, and to other approaches used by school leaders nationally to promote effective implementation of SEL in their schools.



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What is SEL?

Although multiple frameworks exist that promote effective social and emotional development (Berg, Nolan, Yoder, et al., 2019), most practitioners and policymakers are familiar with and use the five core social and emotional competencies identified by the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL) (Bryant, Crowley, & Davidsen, 2020; Dusenbury, Yoder, Dermody, & Weissberg, 2020). CASEL recently updated its framework (see Figure 1) to be more inclusive of equity and culture and elevated the key settings in which young people develop and apply their competencies (CASEL, 2020b). The updated framework is particularly relevant for school leaders as it helps educators reflect upon and integrate the contexts in which young people live and learn.

Specifically, the updated definition, expansions on the five core competencies, and key settings include additional emphases on:

- Defining the importance of systemic or schoolwide SEL, in which school systems must focus on the adults' social and emotional competencies and capacities to support students and the use of data for continuous improvement.
- Identifying strategies to connect with families and communities to meet the social and emotional needs of students and adults.
- Understanding the context in which students grow and develop as critical ingredients to social and emotional development.
- Using science to demonstrate that social and emotional development are core functions to academic learning and human development.
- Centering the role of agency, identity, and belonging as core components of any SEL program and practice.
- Elevating skills that promote equity and excellence within the five core competencies, such as understanding social, cultural, and linguistic assets; understanding the influences of organizations and systems on behavior; and standing up for the rights of others.

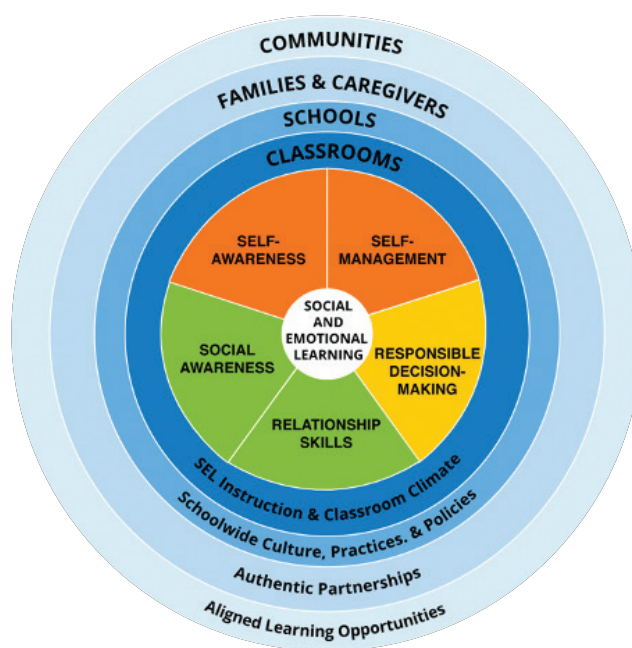


Figure 1.
CASEL's framework for social and emotional learning¹

Implementing an evidence-based SEL program and integrating these core components with an eye towards equity and excellence is no easy task (Mahoney et al., 2020). In the next section, we examine what the SEL research tells us about what works in practice, with a careful look at the Harmony program as a positive exemplar.

¹ Image retrieved from <https://casel.org/sel-framework/>

The Harmony SEL Program

From Research to Practice

Research has found that early and middle childhood are crucially important windows for laying the foundation of social and emotional development (Boustani et al., 2020; Schaps & Battistich, 1991). Not surprisingly, over the past two decades, numerous curricula have and continue to hit the market aimed at improving children's social and emotional competency (e.g., Boustani et al., 2020; Hoffman, 2009; Lawson et al., 2019). In response, school leaders have endeavored to better understand the system-level conditions needed to effectively implement these programs (Mahoney et al., 2020) and support educator well-being (Jennings, Minnici, & Yoder, 2019). Given the prolific number of SEL curricula developed within the last decade, researchers and scholars have attempted to elevate core components of evidence-based SEL programs (e.g., CASEL, 2020b; Durlak et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2017; Rimm-Kaufman & Hulleman, 2015). Notably, the Harmony program has been found to exemplify many of the key characteristics identified through this research. Below, drawing from collaborative program development, refinement, and evaluation work by the authors (and the developers of the program from Arizona State University), we focus on the research grounding and conceptual model of the Harmony SEL Program.

Program Vision and Goals

Harmony is currently being used in over 31,000 schools nationwide. Its growing appeal is largely twofold—a solid research base and a high level of practicality and adaptability to diverse classroom schedules and needs. The program, in brief, engages children in relationship-building and instructional activities designed to strengthen socialization, communication, and interpersonal skills. The immediate goal is to produce inclusive classrooms in which students engage in exploring their differences and commonalities in safe and supportive environments. This approach provides opportunities to create more meaningful relationships across diverse groups of students, improving prosocial behavior, and decreasing personal disputes. As more children learn the necessary intra- and inter-personal skills for getting along in authentic spaces, the long-term goal to improve the way in which they, as adults, will interact in every facet of society can be achieved.



Research on Harmony

What does the research show about Harmony? Harmony has a strong research base that has been developed across evaluations spanning a wide range of student ages and demographics. Initial research conducted by Arizona State University found that schools using Harmony experienced a variety of positive results, including improvements in student academic achievement and empathy, as well as a decrease in bullying, teasing, aggression, and stereotyping. In a quasi-experimental study with fifth-grade students from a diverse population (with over 40% students of color), researchers found that Harmony had a positive impact on children's peer relations when compared to control groups. Specifically, researchers found that engagement in Harmony improved students' relationships, connection to school, feelings of inclusion, engagement in school, and development of friendships with peers of diverse backgrounds. The researchers also found improved academic outcomes (increased writing and math performance) and decreased aggressive behavior among students (DeLay et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2017). In a separate quasi-experimental study conducted in a prekindergarten classroom, students who engaged in Harmony Practices (i.e., Buddy Up, one of the program's core components) interacted with peers more often and with a wider variety of peers than students who did not (Hanish et al., 2016).

In addition to these studies, the present authors from Johns Hopkins University are in the midst of a four-year longitudinal study of 20 Harmony elementary schools in Southern California (see Morrison et al., 2019), providing additional evidence about the schoolwide conditions that promote effective implementation of this program. To date, participating teachers have reported that the program has positively influenced student social and emotional skills including respect for one another, empathy for others, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, self-management, and self-awareness. Students have also noted improvements in themselves and their peers. Their perceptions of the overall climate in their schools appears to be shifting upward as well. As schools moved from their first to their second year of using the program, students were more likely to express that their peers respect one another, behave well in class, help one another learn, and are treated fairly regardless of their race or background. This growth implies that as students engage more with the program, social, emotional, and educational benefits continue to improve.

Section II

The Harmony Program

Harmony consists of core components centered on explicit SEL instruction and specific daily practices. Figure 2 outlines the core beliefs and theory that Harmony leverages to drive improvements in students' social, emotional, and academic development (Rimm-Kaufman & Hulleman, 2015). Explicit instruction occurs within Harmony's five units and lessons comprised of relationship activities that allow students to learn and practice social and emotional skills at least once per week. Lessons and activities include storybooks and discussions, participatory, play-based peer activities, interactive games, hands-on activities, and role-plays (Martin et al., 2017). The program's Everyday Practices of Meet Up, Buddy Up, and Harmony Goals provide students with ongoing and supportive opportunities to interact with diverse peers, and to participate in discussions, decision-making, problem solving, and community building activities (Martin et al., 2017).

Along with these key mechanisms, broad principles of human development are included within Harmony (see Yoder, 2020 for review). For example, units and lessons are developmentally structured so that students engage in more complex tasks as they get older, and skills are identified that can be explicitly learned in lessons and reinforced during academic instruction. In addition, the program provides opportunities for culturally responsive practices in which students get to talk about their lived experiences and see themselves within the classroom context.

Harmony also recognizes the importance of schoolwide SEL or those strategies that school leaders, in collaboration with the broader school community, can take to embed SEL across the school day and into the other spaces where students live and learn (Mahoney et al., 2020). For example, Harmony promotes that SEL is not only for students, but also incorporates strategies for educators to focus on their own competencies and capacities to effectively engage students in SEL practices. Furthermore, Harmony emphasizes the use of data—student outcome, implementation data, and school climate data—for formative purposes and continuous improvement as a critical ingredient for SEL success (Assessment Working Group, 2019).

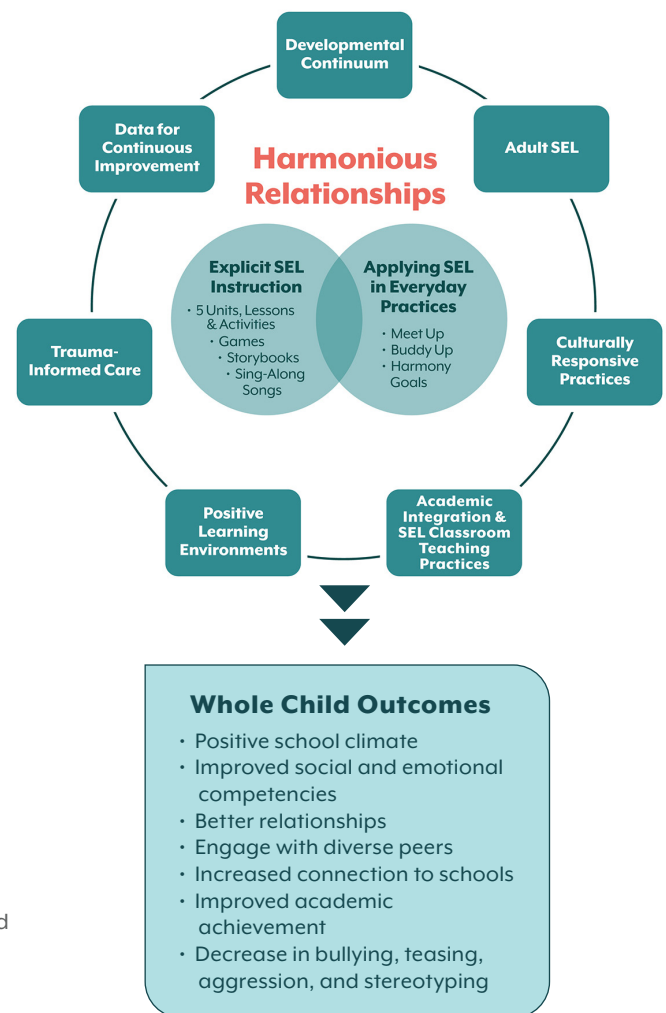


Figure 2.
Harmony Conceptual Model

Section III

Maximizing Success with SEL – Best Practices for School Leadership

What does it mean and look like to effectively implement schoolwide SEL, inclusive of an SEL program? Suppose that you're a principal at a school that is adopting an SEL program for the first time. You ask yourself: *"What do I need to know to get started? How can I make sure that my teachers are going to succeed?"* If your school is just getting started in SEL, the research recommends six key practices for you to consider:

1. Leverage teacher leaders.
2. Create a common understanding of SEL across the school community.
3. Provide the direction and "clout" to implement the program schoolwide.
4. Make sure teachers are provided with ongoing professional learning and support.
5. Actively promote the program by providing ample time and resources and acknowledging teacher challenges.
6. Use data for continuous improvement.

We discuss each of these practices in greater depth below. For each best practice, we highlight the research on that topic ("What the Research Shows") and then describe how school leaders can promote effective implementation of a specific SEL program, Harmony, through an example application ("Harmony in Action").

Adult SEL

As we discuss the six key practices below, it is important to note the importance of adult SEL for the school leader, the teachers, and the other adults who support SEL efforts across the school (e.g., school counselors and social workers). Adult SEL, or the social and emotional competencies and capacities educators need to implement SEL successfully, are critical ingredients for any SEL program or practice aimed at students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2008; Jennings et al., 2019; Yoder, 2014). Educators need to be able to successfully understand themselves, manage their own emotions and behaviors, and build authentic relationships with their students, colleagues, families, and community members. Importantly, they need the capacities to promote SEL for students. Throughout the recommendations, you will see the importance of adults using their competencies to build their understanding of equitable SEL practices and collaborate with colleagues to implement culturally responsive practices that lift the assets that all students and adults bring.

BEST PRACTICE #1

Leverage teacher leaders and school champions

What the Research Shows

When getting started with new innovations, such as schoolwide SEL curriculum programs, research has shown that:

- Leadership for change is most effective when carried out by a small group of educators, with the principal functioning as a strong, cohesive force (Marzano, 2003). Substantive change initiatives must be supported by both administrators and teachers (Conley & Bacharach, 1990; Glickman, 1993; 1998; Maeroff, 1988; Marzano, 2003; Schlechty, 1990).
- Those who work closely with students each day—namely the teachers, social workers, and guidance counselors—“must be involved in substantive decisions regarding changes that affect their day-to-day lives” (Blasé & Kirby, 2000; Marzano, 2003, p. 174).

- Shared decision-making between teachers and school leadership enhances program implementation (Durlak & DuPre, 2008).

What can we take away from these findings? School leaders should leverage teacher leaders and “school champions” to help drive program implementation (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Rogers, 2003). This is particularly important to help ensure that SEL is used to create equitable learning environments for all students. Having veteran, respected teachers who are familiar with the program and can share their expertise and enthusiasm with others can be a key in fostering buy-in and implementation among staff. These factors appeared to be particularly important in the ongoing study of Harmony in California (Morrison et al., 2019). Morrison and colleagues (2019) found that having a “program champion” greatly accelerated the implementation process in many of the study’s schools.

Harmony in Action

Ms. Fernandez, the principal of Atlantic Elementary School, hears about Harmony from a colleague in a neighboring district. Knowing the importance of selecting evidence-based curricula for her teachers, she visits the Harmony website² to learn more. After reviewing the program’s evidence support, design, and materials³, she sees strong potential for helping her students improve their social and emotional skills. She knows from prior experiences that to be successful, a new program must have strong teacher buy-in. So, she strategically identifies a small cross-grade-level group of teachers—three veterans who are well respected by their peers, two mid-career teachers who have had experience with social and emotional learning in other districts, and a second-year, high-energy teacher who is a natural talent for motivating and mobilizing others. Ms. Fernandez asks this newly formed leadership group to “research” Harmony and come back with a verdict: “pursue or purge?” Two weeks later, the team returns as strong advocates of pursuit. In preparation for introducing Harmony at the next faculty meeting, they immediately begin chatting with other teachers to promote interest and hear reactions. A subsequent faculty vote indicates strong teacher buy-in for Harmony. During the year, the Atlantic Elementary Harmony Leadership Team plays a direct role in keeping implementation supported and strong.

BEST PRACTICE #2

Create a common understanding of SEL across the school community

What the Research Shows

Researchers and practitioners have attempted to understand the development of social and emotional skills, attitudes, and knowledge for decades (Osher, Kidron, Brackett, et al., 2016), resulting in over 130 frameworks for social and emotional development, and over 700 unique terms that represent social and emotional competencies (Berg et al., 2019). From these many frameworks have emerged different vocabulary, terms, and understandings across stakeholder groups (e.g., educators, principals, parents, school counselors, and social workers, etc.). For example, in a recent study connecting in- and out-of-school time SEL programming, researchers found that educators across settings needed to come together to create a collective understanding of SEL and related skills (Schwartz et al., 2020). Petrokubi and Pierce (2021) further note the importance of bringing in multiple stakeholders across communities to determine the approach for SEL efforts. They highlight that this helps ensure that SEL efforts promote and reflect the cultures, contributions, and assets of the school community. Given the diverse definitions and approaches to SEL, it is thus critical to bring the school community together to create common definitions and pathways that promote inclusive environments for all students (Schlund, Jagers, & Schlinger, 2020).



² For school leaders interested in learning more about Harmony and whether it might be a good match for their school, visit <https://www.harmonysel.org/admins/>

³ Harmony program lessons and other resources can be found at <https://online.harmonysel.org/>

Harmony in Action

Leveraging the school's Harmony Leadership Team, Ms. Fernandez asked members to engage in schoolwide professional learning on what SEL is and the chosen SEL framework and skills on which Atlantic Elementary School would focus. Because the team adopted the Harmony program, which is aligned to the CASEL framework, they targeted the five CASEL core competencies (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making). They talked about how the skills in Harmony lessons (identified through the objectives) supported the development of the five core competencies, and about how those skills developed differently in the PreK classroom compared to the fifth-grade classroom. Through these conversations, the teachers and staff at Atlantic also began to discuss the emergence of students' SEL skills and competencies not only in Harmony lessons but through academic learning and other spaces within the school. Indeed, an important benefit of this approach was helping the adults develop a common language on SEL.

BEST PRACTICE #3

Provide the direction and “clout” to implement the program schoolwide

What the Research Shows

While research is clear about the importance of leveraging distributed leadership, it also encourages the school leader to provide “clout” and substantive direction to the initiative (Friedkin & Slater, 1994; Little, 1990; Marzano, 2003). This need is particularly true for SEL. Research demonstrates the importance of implementing schoolwide SEL, or practices that intentionally integrate and embed SEL practices throughout the school system—using SEL as a lever for equity and excellence (CASEL, 2020a; Elias et al., 2015; Mart, Weissberg, & Kendziora, 2015). Furthermore, research has found that teachers often express the need for more support and direction from their school leaders on their SEL efforts, including curricular support, professional development support, vision setting, and support on delivering culturally responsive practices (Hamilton & Doss, 2020). Needs such as these require the explicit involvement and support of school leaders. Specifically, school leaders need to provide clear expectations, vision, and integrative support for SEL implementation and should work with their teacher leaders to identify a clearly set-aside time in the school schedule for teachers to deliver SEL instruction. When accompanied with classroom visits, implementation check-ins, embedded professional learning and support, and use of data, research demonstrates that these practices can help establish more consistent, widespread, and effective program use (O'Donnell, 2008; Supovitz & Weathers, 2004).

Harmony in Action

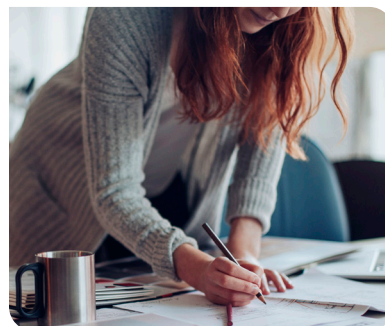
The Harmony Leadership Team at Atlantic Elementary School has been highly active since the schoolwide implementation began last month. The principal, Ms. Fernandez, is pleased to see the team members acting as champions, cheerleaders, and coaches (not as critics or enforcers). She is also happy to observe that teachers in all grades appear to be using Harmony's “Meet Up” and “Buddy Up” activities to promote students' engagement with peers of diverse backgrounds, personal reflections, and social interactions. Less heartening, but not surprising, is hearing that a few “resisters” are not consistently using the Harmony Units that help students develop important social and emotional skills (e.g., empathy, peer relationships, inclusion, and others). Ms. Fernandez embraces distributed school leadership but also knows that accountability and success strongly depend on her personal actions and communications. So, at faculty meetings, she makes Harmony a standard topic, asking teachers and leadership team members to relate experiences, needs, and best practices. She makes it clear that Harmony is a core component of Atlantic Elementary's school improvement plan. Therefore, quality implementation is expected, but support is also available for anyone who needs help. During the week, she makes it a priority to visit different classes informally during Harmony time. She always tries to be encouraging and positive but is unafraid to provide constructive feedback to guide improvement. She is pleased to have recently observed increased usage of the Harmony Units throughout the school.

BEST PRACTICE #4

Make sure teachers are provided with ongoing professional learning and support

What the Research Shows

Research strongly demonstrates the importance of professional learning and follow-up support in promoting high levels of program implementation (Shapley et al., 2010), particularly with SEL programs that center on culturally responsive practices (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Williams, 2019). Research has found that teachers often express the need for additional professional learning and ongoing support with their SEL efforts (Hamilton & Doss, 2020). As school leaders launch new SEL programs, they should embed SEL within their school professional learning strategy, as well as employ strategies to address potential “program fatigue.” Exposing teachers to training that is intensive and ongoing, and that incorporates such practices as observations, discussion, practice, and deep self-reflection, has been found to be particularly effective (Garet et al., 2001; Putnam & Borko, 2000). Providing illustrative examples and models of how to use the program, along with coaching, can also be particularly beneficial (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Demonte, 2013).



Part of training and support should also focus on determining teachers' level of readiness to implement SEL. Factors such as staff openness for change and familiarity with social and emotional development appear to be particularly important considerations (Dymnicki et al., 2014; Wanless & Domitrovich, 2015). Attempting to address these issues proactively by identifying potential support strategies (Wanless & Domitrovich, 2015), clarifying with teachers the connection between SEL and academics, and making a plan to address possible “initiative fatigue” are all key practices principals should consider (CASEL, 2019).

Harmony in Action

Having seen “a great deal too many” educational programs come and go during her 12 years as an educator, Principal Fernandez is particularly appreciative of Harmony’s clear structure and straightforward, yet adaptable, practices. In fact, after a brief trial period, a second-grade teacher enthusiastically described Harmony to her as “pretty much ready to use right out of the box” (meaning the Harmony SEL Online Portal). Ms. Fernandez smiled back at her, while thinking that as much as she supported individual teacher initiative, she didn’t want to risk opening her own Pandora’s Box of implementation. In her view, developing a strong schoolwide Harmony adoption, with consistent and robust practices in every classroom, will require providing teachers with initial and continuous quality professional learning. Fortunately, the Harmony Leadership Team has already been off and running with that ball. They intentionally planned a “three-tiered” professional learning orientation that mixes schoolwide, grade-level, and personalized activities. For a Staff Development Day in September, the team invited a regional Harmony expert to facilitate day-long professional learning focused initially on SEL principles and then more intensively on using the Harmony Online Learning Portal to guide instructional planning. Next, they showed videos of practicing teachers effectively using Quick Connection Cards, leading a Harmony Unit on communication, and setting classroom Harmony Goals with students. The Atlantic Elementary teachers then simulated practices in grade-level groups by alternating roles of teacher and students. As the school year progressed, the professional learning became more scaffolded from broad-based usage of the program to personalized support for teachers and students. In concert with the Harmony Leadership Team, grade-level team leaders scheduled time for teachers to observe each other’s classrooms and attend bi-monthly meetings to discuss practices and experiences. Ms. Fernandez is already looking toward next year. Highest on her priority list is to free up a half-time faculty position as an embedded “Harmony Coach.”

BEST PRACTICE #5

Actively promote the program by providing time and resources and acknowledging teacher challenges

What the Research Shows

In providing support to teachers, it is often important to focus on the human aspects of new program adoption, which can range from feeling resistant to change to high enthusiasm as positive strides are made. Research indicates that early program implementation, regardless of content area, is usually imperfect, and that full program implementation is rare (Dariotis, Bumbarger, Duncan, & Greenberg, 2008; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Lawson et al., 2019). It therefore becomes important for school leaders to acknowledge the challenges teachers face, as well as to provide robust support and encouragement. This is particularly true for SEL programs, in which program implementation is routinely challenged by the false dichotomy of “SEL or academics,” rather than the understanding that all are intertwined in a learning process (Immordino-Yang, Darling-Hammond, & Krone, 2018). However, because core subject curricula typically “take priority” (Boustani et al., 2020; Oberle et al., 2016; Rotheram-Borus, Swendeman, & Chorpita, 2012), finding the instructional time and energy to implement SEL programs is frequently a challenge for teachers (Agley et al., 2020; Boustani et al., 2020; CASEL, 2019; Lawson et al., 2019; Oberle et al., 2016).

Fortunately, research shows that full implementation is possible when educators collaborate with each other, as well as with students, families, and the broader school community. Indeed, research shows that there is often “light at the end of the tunnel” with implementation hurdles. As teachers experience success with evidence-based programs and begin to see them paying dividends, they tend to use these programs more often (Rogers, 2003). In Johns Hopkins’ study of the Harmony program in California elementary schools, it typically took several months for schools to really feel like they were “up and running” with the new program (Morrison et al., 2019). These researchers found, however, that once schools established program routines and familiarized students with SEL instruction, program use became noticeably easier and more habitual for teachers. Further, they found that school leader encouragement and advocacy was a key factor separating the most and least successful implementers. Implementation improved from year one to year two as teachers gained program experience, leading to improved outcomes as teachers increased their implementation fidelity (Morrison et al., 2019).

Harmony in Action

Mr. Siegfried, in his second year at Atlantic Elementary, is meeting with Principal Fernandez and feeling a bit troubled. His third-grade class has a large number of struggling readers and more than the usual number of students who are struggling behaviorally. “Trying to fit everything in, including Harmony, is sometimes overwhelming,” he says. Ms. Fernandez offers kind reassurance and promises to help immediately by assigning one of the paraprofessionals to assist him two mornings a week. She remembers well her own frustrations as a teacher having to learn and implement new programs. Now, as a school leader, her plan is to bolster staff morale and confidence in several ways. One approach is recognizing that teachers, like students, also have social and emotional needs. So, she ensures that teachers have opportunities to meet with her individually (as Mr. Siegfried did) and with each other (in the grade-level groups) to share experiences, provide support, and problem solve collaboratively. Second, she publicly advocates Harmony and recognizes her staff for their implementation achievements in communications with families, community members, and the school district. Third, through her classroom visits and informal interactions with teachers, she reinforces teacher implementation and provides targeted feedback to teachers according to their individual needs. For example, Ms. Fernandez observed Mr. Siegfried’s class engaging in a rather lively “Buddy Up” activity on “What makes you laugh?” At the next faculty meeting, she praised this activity as exemplifying good Harmony instruction, highlighting that it “made her laugh all day!” For Mr. Siegfried, it was a message received and confidence restored.

BEST PRACTICE #6

Use data for continuous improvement

What the Research Shows

With any new effort or innovation, including those related to SEL, it is essential that data be used to foster continuous improvement. As schools launch new initiatives, data is needed to help understand readiness levels as well as school conditions for implementation (American Institutes for Research, 2020). Over time, data collection is necessary to help identify how well the initiative is being implemented and the associated adult and student outcomes that may be resulting from the efforts (American Institutes for Research, 2020). Although the SEL research field recognizes that student social and emotional competence data should not be used for high-stakes decisions, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers recognize the importance of collecting student competence data from an asset-based approach. Indeed, collecting data of this type is essential in helping make informed decisions about SEL instruction and in communicating with students, families, and community partners about SEL progress (Assessment Working Group, 2019; McKown, 2019). When engaging in this process, it is important for school leaders and teachers to work collaboratively. By learning about SEL assessments and processing data as a team, schools can (a) ensure that teachers use the data in ways that are intended, and (b) identify strategies to partner with students and families in data-based decision making (McKown, 2019).



Harmony in Action

Reflecting on the CASEL core competencies and the skills taught within Harmony, Atlantic Elementary's Harmony Leadership Team decided to identify "performance indicators" that they could use to help measure students' SEL development. As part of this process, the team worked together to identify what these skills would look like if students were meeting SEL expectations or needed improvement. The team paid particularly close attention to issues of equity as they identified their indicators. They specifically wanted to know if students were on track based on the overall objectives for the Harmony units. Because these indicators were meant for informal checks, they used the data collected through this process to identify skills that teachers needed to reinforce during instruction throughout the day. Ms. Fernandez also used the school walkthrough tool from Harmony during her informal classroom visits to provide teachers feedback on their implementation of the program lessons and Everyday Practices. Atlantic Elementary is now in the process of determining how to use these informal checks to help students develop their own personal Harmony goals.

Conclusion

Harmony is a unique SEL program that embeds social and emotional skill development in the context of relationships, creating environments in which students can thrive as well as providing opportunities for students to develop and apply new skills. As noted throughout this brief, Harmony provides tools and strategies that align with evidence-based SEL programs. By leveraging the key practices discussed, school principals can foster the conditions for successful SEL instruction in their schools. As teachers, administrators, support staff, counselors, social workers, families, and students work together to implement Harmony components, we can collectively create more harmonious relationships for all students and adults in the school setting.



Additional Resources

For further research and recommendations in addition to that provided in this brief, please see resources provided by CASEL (2020):

- **The CASEL Guide to Schoolwide Social and Emotional Learning** – a comprehensive resource providing guidance and recommendations for schools just getting started with SEL. For more information, visit <https://schoolguide.casel.org>
- **Collaborating States Initiative – Teacher Practice Resource page** – an index of resources, including resources for SEL content-alignment, guidance on instructional best practices, and SEL assessment resources. The index also provides a variety of downloadable SEL lesson plans and student activities. For more information, visit <https://casel.org/csi-resources-teacher-practices> or <https://casel.org/csi-resources>
- **For additional information on evidence-based SEL programs and curricula**, please see the **CASEL Program Guide**. For more information, visit <https://casel.org/guide>

For additional resources and information concerning Harmony SEL, please see the resources provided below:

- For school leaders interested in learning more about Harmony and whether it might be a good match for their school, visit <https://www.harmonysel.org/admins/>
- Additional information and guidance on Harmony “Meet Up” activities can be found at <https://online.harmonysel.org/meet-up-overview>
- Additional information and guidance on “Buddy Up” activities can be found at <https://online.harmonysel.org/buddy-up-overview>
- Harmony “Quick Connection Cards” are available at <https://online.harmonysel.org/quick-connection-cards>
- For additional information on Harmony lessons, visit <https://online.harmonysel.org>

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