



SEL in Action Grantee Playbook

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INTRODUCTION

You care about your students and their overall well-being. We know firsthand—you put in the time, energy, and commitment to consider your students’ social and emotional learning (SEL), you applied for an SEL in Action grant, and now you’re making the most of that funding. This is cause for celebration! It’s also another project on your already-full plate.

SEL is like that: joy and struggle exist in the same moment.

This Playbook is here to help with the struggle—and to celebrate the joys. This has been created *by* SEL in Action grantees *for* SEL in Action grantees. It is also meant to be a resource to the field. If you are an educator doing SEL for yourself, your students, and your community, this Playbook is for you.

This is also meant to provide insight, recommendations and best practices for educators—you!—as you work with your school, district, organization and community. It’s meant to give you quick, ready-to-use resources, tips, and strategies to make your SEL work stronger, more effective, and more fun.

We know you are working toward an education system that supports *all* students, and especially historically marginalized students, so that everyone can learn and build skills necessary for healthy, purposeful pursuits beyond secondary school. We’re doing that work, too.

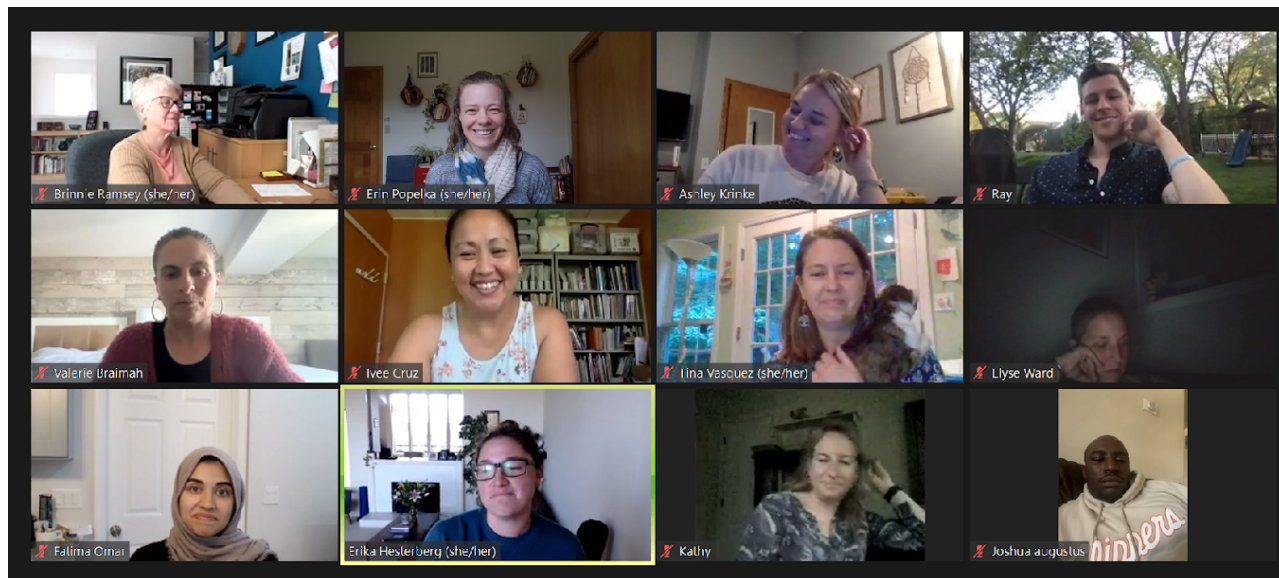


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This Playbook will help us do that work together.

With gratitude,

Ashley, Ray, Valerie, Ivey, Tina, Elyse, Kathy, Joshua, and Stacy



MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR SEL WORK

There are many things in school that are easy to quantify. Attendance. Days remaining in the school year. Number of students in your classroom, school or district.

SEL is often harder to quantify. How do you measure how students feel? Do staff feel more or less connected to each other after a meeting? Does a mentorship program help school morale? There isn't one easy measure for any of these questions.

There are, however, good indicators that can help you know if you're on the right track. This Playbook is designed to provide you with a roadmap so you can see where you need to go and so that you'll have what you need when you get there.

We'll talk you through questions to consider as you set your "North Star." We've suggested a Progress Monitoring Cycle below as a way to stay on track and adjust if needed. We also know that buy-in, whether individually, with colleagues, or with students and the community, is essential. We strive to make sure that everyone feels like they belong in the room and as part of the SEL. To help with this, we've suggested a few ideas to support buy-in with your SEL offerings. Read on!



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“Core practices you may believe are part of what you do may actually be living primarily with just a few leaders or early adopters. All of our MS teachers had been trained in circle and were using it regularly. We really believed it was just part of how we did advisory. Then a couple of key positions turned over (the principal who had been upholding the expectation, and the lead Advisory teacher who had been supporting and training others in the practices), and even the teachers who had been doing it before gradually let it fade from their practice. Lesson learned: build systems and codify practices to outlive people, and ensure that onboarding of new leadership includes clear statements of non-negotiable practices.”

- Valerie

Set Your North Star

Why do you do SEL? What motivates you to work with and for students every day? How is SEL part of your daily practice—for yourself, your students, and your community? How does equity factor in? Having answers to these questions has helped us when challenges came up or when we felt like we weren’t

having the impact we’d hoped to have. Setting a “North Star” allows us to course-correct when we’ve gone astray and gives us key goals to work towards. It also helps us consider equity in the work.

Equity

We do our SEL work with an explicit focus on equity. Our SEL is not “white supremacy with a hug,” as Dr. Dena Simmons has phrased it. We make sure our practices specifically serve students who are farthest from opportunity, including students of color, students with disabilities, students who are in the foster system or are living homeless, and students who are refugees and/or multilingual learners. When this work makes a difference in the lives of those students, we know we’re on the right track.

“SEL is not meant to make folks compliant, or get the ‘bad behavior’ or ‘trouble makers’ but instead to honor voices. It comes back to Indigenous wisdom. To have that normalized across a broader mainstream spectrum is so powerful—for me as an individual but also more broadly. And that everybody owns it. And it’s not unspoken, we talk about things openly.”
-Ivee

We found that centering equity in SEL requires intentional shifts to focus on system design and individual student well-being

Move from this...	Toward this*
SEL that focuses on the individual student	Examining and changing the system-level conditions in which students are being asked to learn and practice SEL
SEL that focuses on interpersonal relationships	Fostering understanding of root causes of systemic inequities and one’s identity, role and agency
SEL implementation that is confined by the boundaries of a standalone program, perceived as a separate initiative or has limited reach	Coherently integrating SEL throughout all aspects of the education system including academics

[“Heeding the Call for Change,”](#) page 7.

Resource:



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- ["Heeding the Call for Change: Centering Equity in Social & Emotional Learning."](#) This publication explores the different ways educators and school systems are centering equity in SEL.
- ["Integrating a Focus on Equity into Social and Emotional Learning."](#) This resource helps educators ground SEL with a focus on equity.
- ["SEL as a Lever for Equity and Excellence."](#) This website from CASEL offers tools for districts working to advance equity and excellence by cultivating adult and student practices that close opportunity gaps and create more inclusive school communities.
- ["Why SEL Alone Isn't Enough."](#) This article from ASCD by Dr. Dena Simmons gives concrete examples and next steps so that SEL does not become "white supremacy with a hug."

Generating Buy-in and Community Co-Creation

How can we create SEL in our communities that respects and honors where everyone is in the process and the wealth of experience they bring? Some students, colleagues, and families are just beginning their SEL journeys, while some have been doing this work for years. How can we consider buy-in and co-creation in our SEL planning?

Buy-in and co-creation are not the same. With buy-in, sometimes the work has started, and we're trying to bring people in where we are. Or new staff members join, and we want to include them in the work. While it can be challenging to bring people in while the work is underway, it is always helpful to have more motivated adults and students to move the work forward. Do your best to ask questions, be open to new ideas, and let the growing and changing team be a source of inspiration.

"Make sure that you include opportunities for students to express their voice and choice. Kids need to feel like their opinions matter. Even if you, as a teacher, have a great idea, be willing and flexible to make changes according to your students' points of view."

-Kathy's students. See all of their recommendations in this 2-minute video [HERE](#)

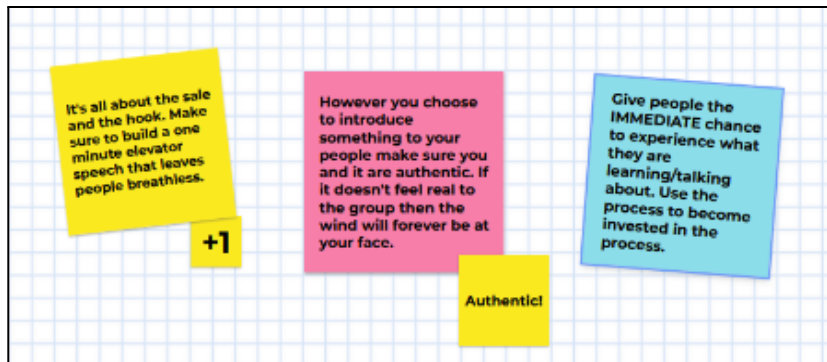
With co-creation, we identify as many key partners in the work from the beginning, and we create our SEL programs or activities with them. That could look like students helping to identify a need for classroom "peace corners," and working with teachers to decide what will be in those spaces and how the class will use them. Or it could look like a mentorship program where mentors and mentees co-design the arc of the year's activities.

"My tip: Find out who else might be doing SEL work in your district and connect with them. It's easy to feel unsupported. When I got this grant, I didn't even know who was in charge of SEL in the district. I reached out over the summer just to talk, and he had no idea about the work that my colleague and I were doing at the high school. Sometimes it's just about creating those connections."

-Tina



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Here are a few resources to help:

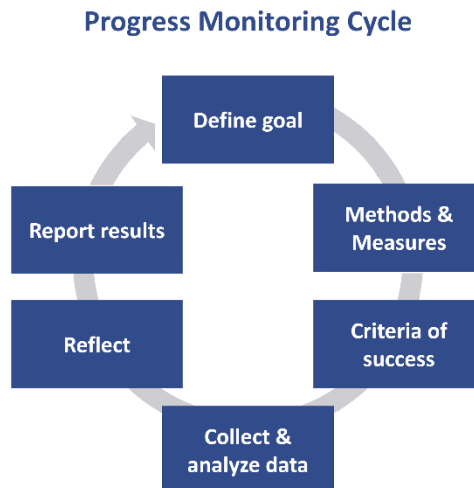
- [Edutopia: “Creating Buy-In for SEL at Your School.”](#) This article shares seven tips to help get colleagues on board with SEL.
- [Move this World: Eight Strategies to Generate Buy-In.](#) This blog post shares strategies to help get fellow educators on-board with SEL practices.
- [“Schools Face Fears of ‘Critical Race Theory’ as they Scale Up Social and Emotional Learning.”](#) This article in *Education Week* examines some of the political questions around SEL.

Progress Monitoring Cycle

Is your SEL having the impact you expect? Let’s find out!

We suggest a 6 step process, along with guiding questions, as you consider assessing your SEL work:

1. *Define goal*
 - What are your goals?
 - Who else is working on something similar?
 - Who else has a stake in the success of these goals? Have they had a chance to give input?
2. *Methods & measures*
 - How will you collect data - quantitative and/or qualitative - for your SEL work?
 - What are the pros and cons of a survey? A focus group? Something else?
 - Whose voices are you collecting in this data? Whose voices are you leaving out?
3. *Criteria of success*
 - What does success look like?
 - What does success feel like?
 - Who will celebrate the success? Who might be disappointed?
4. *Collect & analyze data*
 - Who is helping you analyze





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- data?
 - Why is it important to collaborate on analyzing data?
 - What data is important to collect every month? Every quarter? Every year?
- 5. *Reflect on areas of improvement*
 - What was successful?
 - What was challenging?
 - What felt connecting and engaging?
 - What felt disappointing or frustrating?
- 6. *Report results*
 - Who would benefit from hearing how things went?
 - Whose voices do we need to showcase as part of our results? Whose voices are left out?
 - Who has a stake in the next chapter of the work?

Then repeat! We do this process at varying cadences: sometimes monthly, sometimes quarterly, sometimes on trimesters or semesters. Repeat the progress monitoring cycle at the frequency that makes the most sense for your SEL work.

“The grant award ended up being the catalyst to change the lives of many students and staff. Our grant’s focus was to get



more girls active in sports and wellness in order to learn



more about science, gain confidence, and seek opportunities not yet heard of. Our project accomplished great goals. We incorporated dance, cultures, nutrition, goal setting and so much more which helped bring out the best in our school culture.

Students earned scholarships in sports, had a higher participation in sports, a deliberate focus on culture, and expanded through multiple schools in our district. I have recently transferred to the continuation school in our district. The grant has given me confidence to connect and collaborate with other educators and the work is being recognized. Hopefully I get another opportunity to see how many stars we can reach.”

-Joshua

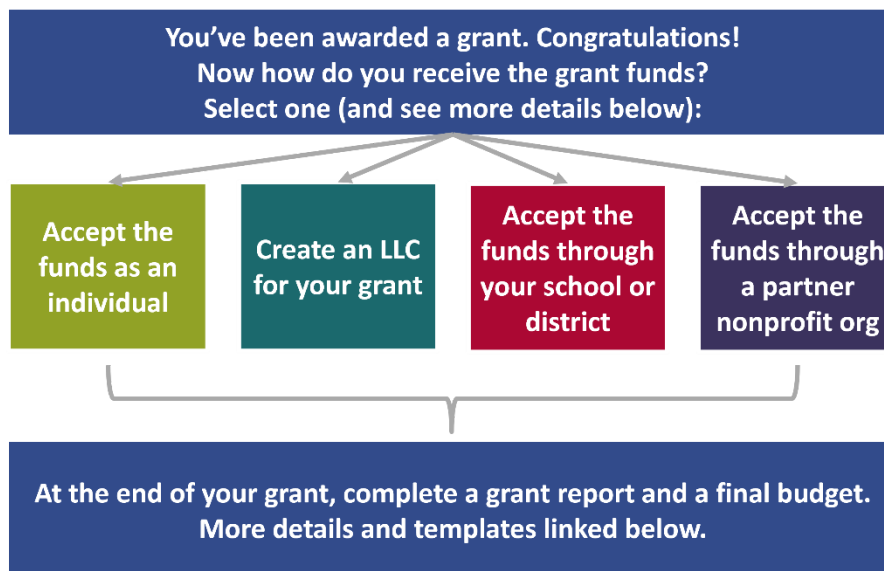
REPORTING ON YOUR SEL WORK

For many SEL in Action grantees, this is the first time you’ve ever been awarded a grant. It can be confusing to know where to start. Should you accept the grant through your school or district? As an individual? How can you spend the funds? What budget reporting do you need? This section offers a few ideas and resources to get started.



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Accepting and Spending Grant Funds



- *Accept your grant as an individual.* Many grantees choose to accept their award as an individual, in which case the grant funds are given directly to them. The advantage to this system is that you can spend the money directly without going through anyone else. The disadvantage is that you'll receive a 1099 form for your taxes; the IRS considers this to be individual income. If you choose to go this route, please consult with a tax professional.
- *Create an LLC for your grant.* Some grantees have created an LLC to receive grant funds. The advantages and disadvantages are similar to accepting the funds as an individual. If you choose to go this route, please consult with a tax professional.
- *Accept the grant through your school or district.* Choosing to send the money through your school or district means that you don't have to worry about extra income on your personal taxes, but you do have to follow the steps required from your school or district in order to be able to spend the funds. How can you buy supplies? Pay for substitutes or stipends? What documentation is required? Make sure to talk to your school or district's finance department to learn more about what is required for spending grants funds through them.
- *Accept the grant through a partner nonprofit organization.* If your grant will work with a nonprofit organization, the nonprofit can receive the funds directly. This is a great option if all of the funds will ultimately be channeled to the nonprofit organization. If funds are split between organizations, make sure that everyone is clear on the budget before funds are deposited in one place.

SEL in Action Grant Reporting

When you receive a grant, it's common for you to have to write a grant report. Sometimes grantees submit interim reports midway through the grant or sometimes they submit final reports after the work is complete. For the SEL in Action Awards, we ask for a final report from grantees. You can find the



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questions and a template for the grant report [HERE](#). You can see a sample educator report [HERE](#) and a sample district report [HERE](#).

It's also helpful to collect materials for your final grant report along the way. Here are some items that could be helpful for you to compile each month or each term to help with your final report:

- Student work
- Quotes from program participants
- Pictures
- Social media posts
- Notes about successes
- Notes about challenges
- A list of outreach or publicity efforts
- Meeting agendas
- Feedback forms and/or surveys
- Monthly budget (see template below)

As you consider your grant report, think about how best to tell the story of your impact. This can be quantitative with survey data, for example, or it can be qualitative with social media or news coverage or videos. We welcome storytelling in many different forms!

“That there are certain groups and communities targeted makes SEL in Action unique. I’ve been working with at-risk, marginalized communities for my entire career. Jumping into the SEL world felt very mainstream, and I’ve been trying to bring in equity. But finally being in a place where I can bridge the two and not have to compartmentalize—in a community of like minded people—is so powerful. “
-Ivee

Budget

SEL in Action will also ask for a budget about how your funds were spent. You can find a budget template below or linked as part of the grant report [HERE](#). This template includes a way to track what you’ve spent and when. If you decide to track your grant every month or every quarter, add spent funds in an ongoing way on this budget. You can also add projected expenses, if you know you’ll need to spend money later on.

SUSTAINING YOUR SEL WORK

Sustaining SEL can be a challenge. We run low on patience. We get frustrated. We wonder if what we’re doing is having the impact we hope it will. We also enjoy lots of bright spots—and these keep us going. We love it when students tell us they practiced a mindful moment when they were angry at home. Or watching a mentee and a mentor laughing during a shared experience. Or colleagues who show us how to be empathetic in challenging situations.

We’re also here to help. Read on to learn more about resources, allies and collaborative partnerships, and other funding for your SEL work.



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Allies and Collaborative Partnerships

You have allies in this work - even some that you may not have met yet. Are other teachers or administrators in your building or district prioritizing SEL? Do you have a district-wide SEL coordinator?

Have you connected with school counselors? What are other teachers doing with SEL in their classrooms? Once you've found other like-minded educators, consider how you can support each other in the work.

Here are a few other resources for finding and nurturing allies, as well as building collaborative partnerships:

- [“Community Tool Box: Recognizing Allies”](#). This chapter of an online resources offers ways to successfully recruit and retain people and groups who share your mission and goals, so that your mission and goals can be achieved.
- Conferences:
 - [ASCD Annual Conference](#). Virtual and in-person.
 - [Schools of the Future Conference](#), Hawai'i Convention Center.
 - [SEL Exchange](#), hosted by CASEL. Virtual.

“What’s helped me sustain this effort is getting connected to the community. My work within my school was expanded to the district, and what helped was getting connected to other people doing the work. I worked with a collaborative that incorporated folks in the DOE, policy organizations, universities, etc. I got to meet other people doing SEL work across the state and also through being a grantee. Those partnerships are what helped keep me going. As teachers, you can feel like you’re alone in an island by yourself, but partnerships help with that.”

-Ivee

Other Funding for your SEL Work

You don’t have to do this work on your own—or on your own dime.

- [Better Kids: Funding Opportunities](#). This website shares COVID-19 Relief Funds for SEL, federal Title funds for SEL, Better Kids Share Scholarship, and additional funding opportunities.
- [Move this World: Compiled SEL funding opportunities](#). This website shares SEL grants in 2020-21, which while dated, also lists perennial opportunities including SEED and EIR grants.
- [Funding for Second Step Curriculum](#). Second Step shares funding opportunities to pay for their curriculum and programs.
- [Committee for Children Blog shares Federal Funding Options](#). This blog post shares federal funding for SEL available in March 2021.
- [Pillars of Peace Hawai'i](#). This foundation supports SEL with grants to schools and nonprofits.
- Local district education funds or local foundations. Research if your school district has any funding options available or if there are local or community foundations that may have options for your work.



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Additional Resources

This is a short, annotated list of resources that we've found helpful in our SEL work. This list is not exhaustive (there are so many great resources out there!), but we hope this will give you a few things to try or that can help you when you're feeling stuck.

- [“Building Districts’ Capacity to Implement Equity-Focused SEL”](#). This blog post from the Regional Educational Laboratory Program highlights key takeaways for implementing high-quality, equitable SEL districtwide.
- [Ceeds of Peace Toolkit](#). This Toolkit is designed for parents/caregivers, teachers, and community members to put knowledge into action with concrete activities, lessons, games, discussion topics, and techniques.
- [Compassionate Ko’olaupoko: Growing an Island of Support](#). With a particular focus for districts, Compassionate Ko’olaupoko empowers communities to improve the SEL of youth and families and strengthens a culture of caring.
- [“Explore SEL: Navigate the complex field of social and emotional learning.”](#) This Harvard University website shares common areas of SEL, different frameworks for SEL, and what SEL skills appear across frameworks.
- [“SEL in School Districts: A systematic approach aligns school district policies, resources, and actions to support SEL.”](#) This website from CASEL examines how a systemic, districtwide approach to SEL supports and equitable, high-quality education for all.
- [SEL for Teachers](#). This website is designed for teachers implementing SEL in their classrooms, schools and districts, and includes a practitioner-curated Resource Hub and interviews with districts.

“This is an awesome resource full of information, created by teachers, for teachers, on best practices and things that they have done at their schools to help increase social and emotional learning and emotional intelligence.”

-Ray. See his 2-minute tour of the SEL for Teachers Resource Hub [HERE](#)

- [“When Districts Support and Integrate Social and Emotional Learning: Findings from an Ongoing Evaluation of Districtwide Implementation of SEL”](#). This research paper by the Education Policy Center in October 2016 makes a case for the importance of SEL at the elementary and middle school level.
- [Yoga Ed](#). Yoga Ed offers on-demand training, classes, and resources to support physical and mental health.

CLOSING

If you've learned anything from this Playbook, we hope it is this: You're not alone in this work! As you complete your SEL in Action grant, as you connect with your school and community, and as you create and nurture partnerships, know that we're all doing this work together.

We're here to help! Email the SEL in Action team anytime at selinaction@education-first.com.