**Selecting an Evidence-Based Program**

Evidence-based programs are an important part of systemic SEL. This tool will help you select a program that aligns with the hopes and needs of staff, students, and families, as well as school and district priorities.

**Before you begin:** It’s essential to involve staff, families, students, out-of-school time providers, and community partners in the process of selecting an evidence-based program, as their perspectives are critical in identifying a program that will be the right match for your school community. Include representatives from these groups on your program selection team with equity in mind – seek out team members who tend to be left out of decision-making (e.g., students and families from underrepresented minority groups or those with special needs) and gather general input from an even broader group of stakeholders. Your team may wish to conduct listening tours or send out a survey to get a wide variety of viewpoints.

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| **Potential questions for parent/staff survey or listening tour:*** *What kind of skill-building is most important in supporting (students/your child) to succeed and thrive?*
* *What kind of school environment is key to support (students/your child) to succeed and thrive?*
* *When making decisions about curriculum and instructional strategies, what should we know about what works best for your (students/child)?*
* *To build positive relationships and a sense of community for your (students/child), what should we know?*
* **(Parents only)** *What can school leaders/your child's teachers do to help you to feel connected and included in our school community?*
* **(Staff only)** *As we research potential SEL programs, what is your advice for selecting a program that will work well in our school?*

**Potential questions for student survey or listening tour:*** *Imagine an ideal school, one you would look forward to going to every day and where you could learn a lot. What does it look like? Sound like? Feel like?*
* *What kinds of skills will help you achieve your goals for your future? In what situations do you get to practice those skills now?*
* *What are teachers or other school staff doing now to help you and others practice social and emotional skills (for example, processing your emotions, showing empathy, understanding other perspectives, working with others, making responsible decisions)? Is it going well? How could it be better?*
* *What are teachers and other staff doing to help students be successful and feel like they are part of the community here? Are all students treated fairly? What could be better?*
* *As a young person, what are the biggest challenges you face?*

Note: You may have asked similar questions if you've recently [developed a shared vision.](https://schoolguide.casel.org/focus-area-1b/shared-vision/)  |

Based on what you heard from staff, families, students, and the community, discuss the following questions as a selection team:

1. **What would a program need to include so that it is able to meet the needs of our student population and their families?** (Consider cultural relevance and responsiveness, language needs, etc.)
2. **What kind of program or approach (e.g., lesson-based, academic integration, teacher practices, organizational**) **makes sense based on the needs of our teachers?** (Consider training and support needs, goals for students, school day structure, etc.)
3. **What district goals should we keep in mind while selecting an SEL program?** (Does the district have a Graduate Portrait or specific goals around increasing academic performance? Upending discipline disparities? Providing opportunities for student leadership?)
4. **What school priorities will our evidence-based program for SEL need to align with?** (Does the school have a vision? Other initiatives and priorities such as parent engagement, state SEL standards, or student voice?)

**Keeping in mind your answers to the questions above,** use the [CASEL Program Guides](https://casel.org/guide/) to identify two to four evidence-based programs that you are interested in learning more about. Use the Rating Tables to identify program candidates (consider grade ranges covered, approaches used to promote SEL, settings that reinforce SEL). Then, use program description pages to continue to narrow your search.

Once you have narrowed down to two to four potential programs,gather additional information by visiting the websites of the program providers and contacting them directly to receive answers to specific questions, request sample materials, etc. You may wish to invite programs to give short presentations for your evidence-based program selection team. *When reaching out to providers, developing specific questions related to your context will help them better describe the components of their programming that meet your needs.*

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After reviewing the CASEL Program Guide, place the names of the evidence-based programs you selected in the first row of the table below. Then, rate and compare each program based on the questions in column one.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  **[Name of EBP]** | **[Name of EBP]** | **[Name of EBP]** | **[Name of EBP]** |
| **The program aligns with what is most important to our students and their families.**  | **1 2 3 4** | **1 2 3 4** | **1 2 3 4** | **1 2 3 4** |
| Notes: | Notes: | Notes: | Notes: |
| **The program aligns with what is most important to our staff and meets the logistical needs of teachers** (it can feasibly be accomplished during the school day, is in a format that teachers will find useful, teachers can feasibly attend the amount of training required, etc.) | **1 2 3 4** | **1 2 3 4** | **1 2 3 4** | **1 2 3 4** |
| Notes: | Notes: | Notes: | Notes: |
| **The program’s outcomes align with our district’s goals.** | **1 2 3 4** | **1 2 3 4** | **1 2 3 4** | **1 2 3 4** |
| Notes: | Notes: | Notes: | Notes: |
| **This program will integrate well with things we are already prioritizing at our school.** | **1 2 3 4** | **1 2 3 4** | **1 2 3 4** | **1 2 3 4** |
| Notes: | Notes: | Notes: | Notes: |
| **Total Points** |  |  |  |  |