

Report of the Experts Committee on Promoting and Disseminating Social-Emotional Learning in the Israeli Education System

A brief executive summary



Executive Summary

In recent decades, interest in the topic of social-emotional learning (SEL) has dramatically increased worldwide. This growth is evident both in the scientific literature, as well as in changes being advanced by international organizations and implemented in many education systems. Underlying this shift is a recognition of the need to expand educational goals; addressing a wide range of components including knowledge, life skills and proficiencies, emotional and social skills, positive self-esteem and motivation, as well as values and attitudes.

The growing interest in SEL may be understood within the context of the various cultural, social and economic changes taking place around the world. These processes include the increasing democratization of educational systems and enhanced diversity among students, changes in the division of roles and responsibilities between educational systems and the family and community, as well as changes in the job market and employment opportunities and requirements.

Another major factor driving interest in SEL is the evolving multidisciplinary knowledge regarding learning processes. This literature provides an enhanced understanding of changes in the once-dichotomous distinction between cognitive and emotional/social skills, and of the positive effects of supportive environments and teacher-student relationships on learning. These holistic, systemic, and dynamic perceptions emphasize the need and importance of creating learning environments that can contribute to students' overall development and foster SEL. Extensive empirical research indicates that SEL is consistently associated with gains in academic achievement, mental health, successful employment and relationships, and greater civic engagement. Such gains are accompanied by a clear reduction in problems such as depression, anxiety, and risk-taking behaviors. Moreover, research finds that SEL can be developed and nurtured by deliberate design and various methods, thereby establishing these positive effects in the long term.

In light of the above, SEL has garnered increasing interest in recent years, and vigorous efforts in this field are being made across geographical, cultural, and social boundaries. Various organizations, international institutions, and national educational systems around the world now recognize the importance of SEL and regard it key in effectively addressing today's changing reality.

In Israel too, steps are being taken to examine and promote SEL in the educational system. Among other things, this required envisioning the 'optimal graduate' in terms of the SEL and skills they will need, and preparing a teaching portfolio with the relevant academic knowledge, SEL skills, and values for every subject-matter and age group. It also includes plans to revise and update the current life-skills instruction program.

To support these processes, the Ministry of Education approached the National Academy of Sciences with the request to establish an expert committee to study the implications of SEL for the education system and to formulate recommendations for policy and practice. The expert committee assembled senior researchers from various disciplines for a two-year learning process, during which they reviewed the literature addressing SEL, gathered relevant information from the general public and professionals, held meetings with local and international researchers, and studied the work of various departments in the Ministry of Education and non-governmental organizations in the educational system in general.

This document presents the Committee's views regarding the importance of promoting SEL in the Israeli educational system, guiding principles for the ways to promote this learning, and the processes of its dissemination in the Israeli education system. It should be noted that, as an autonomous academic committee, the Committee members were free to examine new

alternatives and actions, including those not in line with existing practices in the Israeli educational system. However, the Committee finds that the Ministry of Education is making considerable efforts on the subject, and that it is both possible and desirable to leverage existing resources, capabilities, and expertise to continue the progress in this area. There are already qualified professionals in the education system, and the ministry has already invested significant resources in developing various approaches and policies that can serve as infrastructure for developing SEL.

Structure of Concluding Document

1. **Conceptualizing of SEL**, highlighting three principal areas: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and civic.
2. **Recommending guiding principles for promoting and disseminating SEL.**
3. **Reviewing the four major paths for promoting and disseminating SEL:**
 - Creating a school-wide and system-wide “way of life” that promotes the acquisition and development of SEL;
 - Integrating SEL into instruction of existing curriculum subjects such as mathematics, literature, civics and arts;
 - Re-designing the mandatory life-skills program currently in place in all schools and grades;
 - Selectively implementing social-emotional intervention programs.
4. **Describing areas that are essential supports for effective SEL dissemination:** Educational staff: selection, training, and professional development; Parental involvement; Monitoring, evaluation, and assessment tools to support SEL; and Systemic dissemination.

1. Conceptualization of SEL

A key challenge facing the committee was the multitude of definitions and theoretical frameworks in this area. The Committee found that current SEL literature extends beyond social-emotional skills, and includes in the discourse issues such as values, self-perception, mindset, and motivation. Additionally, inconsistency in terminology in the literature cause considerable ambiguity, such as when the same terms are used differently in different theoretical frameworks, or multiple terms refer to the same concepts.

First, the Committee debated which of the many existing terms would be best used locally. Ultimately, it decided on “Social-Emotional Learning” (SEL) – the accepted term in the scientific literature and in the policies of international organizations and educational systems. The Committee also accepted the broadest definition agreed upon by key researchers: "In general, SEL refers to the process by which students learn and apply a set of social, emotional, behavioral, and character skills required for success in school, at work, in relationships, and in civic life."¹

¹ Elias, M. J., Brackett, M. A., Miller, R., Jones, S., Kahn, J., Mahoney, J. L., et. Al. (2019). Developing social and emotional skills and attitudes and ecological assets. In D. Osher, M. J. Mayer, R. J. Jagers, K.

Since various frameworks emphasize different aspects of SEL, it is necessary to choose the ones suitable for the Israeli context. The Committee recommends that the process to select the emphases applicable to the education system as a whole and the various groups within Israeli society include deep discussion of what the optimal graduate means for both. This requires translating general statements of vision and values into more concrete goals, so as to derive the appropriate SEL required. The Committee believes these discussions should emphasize the following three areas:

- **Intrapersonal:** This involves SEL relating to the individual student's self-awareness and self-management, and includes self-regulation, impulse control, problem-solving skills, emotional awareness, task perseverance, self-confidence, optimism, and a growth mindset. This includes SEL that helps deal with situations involving stress and crises resulting from threatening situations and exposure to various aspects of violence.
- **Interpersonal:** This involves SEL pertaining to individual students' relationship with others, such as the ability to understand different points of view, sensitivity and empathy, clear and attentive communication, cooperation, and the ability to resist negative social pressure.
- **Civic:** SEL is also recommended to promote responsible civic participation in a democratic society based on equality, human dignity and social justice. SEL in this sphere addresses cultural sensitivity, caring for the needs of other groups in society, belonging, involvement, and contribution to the community. It also supports the ability to deal with ambiguous values and making moral decisions.

The Committee also recommends additional emphases based on the values and challenges unique to each locality and social group. Schools may choose to emphasize SEL in context of a particular community, and promote, for instance, personal responsibility and skills related to achieving goals of equality and social justice. Such SEL could include coping with exclusion, cultivating self-value, increasing cultural and social sensitivity to others, encouraging interest in learning and critical thinking, developing resilience in the face of various forms of violence, and more.

2. Main Guiding Principles for Promoting and Disseminating SEL

2.1. Integration

SEL is not merely another reform, but rather a deep and fundamental process of cultural and organizational change and embracing a way of life. The move must extend to the entire educational system, including all educational staff both in and out of the classroom, and the overall social, emotional, and learning environment. Researchers, policy makers, and educators widely agree on the need to perceive and address both the school as a whole and the student as a whole, thereby viewing all interactions within this environment as part of one whole school/whole child system. The concept is particularly significant with the context of SEL, which in addition to teaching specific skills, requires a broad and nurturing environment to be taught and strengthened effectively among both students and staff. This encompasses the full continuum of students' daily life both in and out of school, and across different contexts including non-formal education, the community, and the family. A supportive environment will also reinforce the feelings of connection, belonging, safety and self-efficacy that form the infrastructure, emotional availability, and internal motivation for SEL.

Thus, the Committee maintains that promoting SEL is not the domain of a single specific body within the Ministry of Education. It must be a systemic approach that works both laterally to engage multiple departments (e.g. psychological services, pedagogy, informal education, chief scientist), and vertically along organization levels (e.g. from the national headquarter through districts, school principals and teachers). This way of life must be adopted across the entire hierarchy of the system-- beginning with formulating an educational vision, setting education goals and creating relevant policies for professional training and development of administrators and teachers, and reaching all levels of personnel from ministry officials to every single school staff interacting with a student or parent.

Teacher behaviors that foster SEL play an important role in laying the foundation for availability and interest in such learning. It is widely agreed that these behaviors are important in any interaction with students, not just within dedicated classes or interventions.

Successful nurturing and implementing of SEL depends to a large degree on the educational staff. With this in mind, the Committee recommends introducing SEL for all school staff, both educational and administrative. Increasing their awareness of the concept and the tools at their disposal will allow them to serve as models, further facilitating SEL through their behavior. This will undoubtedly have bearing on the training and continued professional development of educators. In this context, the Committee acknowledges the key role of school principals as

leaders who determine school policy and practice, and can ensure SEL principles are present in all teacher-student relationships.

2.2 Adaptation to context, developmental stage, needs, and educational approach

The current literature in the field stresses the importance of adapting SEL to context. This broad statement refers to both the national level (as a program that has succeeded abroad will not necessarily work in Israel), as well as the various groups in society (cultural, linguistic, religious, ethnic, socio-economic groups, and those with varying views of or values regarding education). The literature places strong emphasis on adapting the skills, perceptions and attitudes related to SEL to the student's particular developmental stage, which may dictate specific relevant skills. Contextualization is also important when it comes to the needs of a particular school, urgent needs (such as during emergencies), differences between students, special needs inclusion and integration, a particular pedagogical approach, and so on. Research-based adaptation is therefore a key axis related to almost all areas discussed by the Committee and which will be elaborated further.

2.3 System-wide collaboration

Global knowledge currently indicates that the participation of a wide range of stakeholders is a key condition for the successful implementation of SEL throughout the system. Therefore, policy-making and implementation processes must involve and reflect the full range of stakeholders at national and local levels. This requires the active, joint participation of all divisions and departments of the Ministry, teachers and principals, community representatives, community members, students and parents.

Successfully cultivating SEL as routine in schools (see below) requires the involvement of all participants, both in and out of the school (including ministry officials, supervisors, principals, teachers, counselors, parents, students, administrative staff, non-formal education, and so on). The same applies to SEL within the curriculum and designated lessons: Teachers, counselors and others must routinely coordinate to ensure optimal and comprehensive integration of SEL that addresses all its components including worldviews, values and civic engagement. The Committee also recommends encouraging cooperation between schools and municipal learning communities involved with SEL, and between geographically or culturally related schools in order to scale up successful programs.

2.4 Balancing centralized system policy and local autonomy

Discussing the implementation of SEL policies highlights the significant tension between centralization and decentralization. The Ministry of Education headquarters plays a key role in driving progress by setting goals and policies, allocating resources, and providing support to educators. At the same time, research on the implementation of intervention programs in general, and SEL programs in particular, demonstrates the great importance of involving schools, educators, and local stakeholders in selecting programs and adapting them to the local context. Arbitrary dictates from above often meet with indifference, resistance or pro-forma cooperation, and plans introduced this way are destined to failure. This is particularly relevant to the present discussion because SEL programs require serious advance preparation on the part of schools to study and decide on the appropriate development and implementation for that particular school. Such processes cannot take place without intrinsic motivation for involvement. The Committee believes that the Ministry of Education should design the system, define vision and goals, and make appropriate support resources available. At the same time, however, local parties must be granted autonomy over implementation processes; allowing the individuals schools to promote the internalization of the values underlying SEL, enhance staff competency and a sense of ownership, and increase the chances of long-term sustainability of the program.

2.5 Monitoring, evaluation and research

Measuring students' social-emotional skills plays a key role in identifying needs, in shaping various emphases and ways of developing SEL, and in identifying the extent to which the goals of the school and educational system at large are achieved over time. Continuous monitoring by schools must be complemented by ongoing research and evaluation. The accumulated knowledge about the implementation of SEL programs clearly demonstrates the importance of research to understanding implementation processes, identifying factors that can contribute to advancing SEL. At present, research of this field in Israel is limited in scope. Therefore, the educational system should initiate and fund studies employing diverse methods in order to learn the strengths and weaknesses of program implementation and to identify gaps between objectives, actual implementation in schools, and desired outcomes. Such research is essential for continuous understanding and improvement. The Committee calls for creating a system-wide research program that will combine in-depth examination of applications at class level and large-scale quantitative studies that can provide a reliable picture of the advancement of SEL goals throughout the system. Based on the currently available knowledge on SEL measurement, the Committee feels that at present it should not be included in accountability and high-stakes testing systems such as the *Meitzav* (Hebrew acronym for the Measurement of School Growth and Efficiency standardized testing).

3. Four integrated paths for promoting SEL

The current consensus among scholars is that like any other education processes, SEL is “caught and taught”-- meaning that it is acquired through an environment that cultivates it in a variety of ways, as well as by direct and guided teaching. In keeping with this approach and the main principles outlines above, the Committee recommends four interconnected paths for the acquisition of SEL.

3.1. The school’s “way of life”

3.1.1. School climate and culture

Literature on SEL emphasizes the importance of a supportive environment within the school, community and other contexts in increasing the willingness to use SEL for positive purposes. The concept of SEL as a way of life in school requires constant deliberation in the school about how to cultivate and implement it, not only within the classroom but throughout the entire educational agenda and all aspects of school life, including culture and routines, behavior of educational and administrative staff in and out of the classroom, and in after-school activities and non-formal education. Every interaction with students in the school environment is an important opportunity to ensure the continuity of SEL.

Therefore, the Committee recommends designing the school environment and routines with their impact on SEL in mind. Examples may include using morning sessions to allow students express emotions and perceptions, joint school projects, regular dialogue circles and student-teacher dialogue times, mindfulness activities, opportunities for students to voice ideas, get involved and make an actual difference in school, peer mentoring, and more. The Committee also recommends collaborating with partners such as youth movements and organizations, community centers, after-school centers or sports coaches. Such partnerships would increase all participants’ awareness of the importance of SEL and of the opportunities for facilitating it within their work with children and youth.

3.1.2. Teacher behaviors for acquiring and fostering SEL in the classroom

An analysis of literature in the field points to two types of teacher behaviors that can contribute to SEL:

- a. Behaviors that create a supportive environment. These behaviors are not related to the direct acquisition of SEL, but rather create an educational and social learning experience and environment that foster students’ availability and desire to actively engage in SEL. These behaviors can directly contribute to developing positive self-perception, values and

motivation among students. Additionally, some of these behaviors also promote learning social-emotional skills by demonstrating how the teachers conduct themselves.

- b. Behaviors that focus on the direct acquisition of SEL. These may include teaching skills for conflict resolution, listening, regulating emotion when frustrated, coping with peer pressure, and more. In this context, schools may consider the modular adoption of teacher practices from intervention programs that have proven effective. This is the idea behind the [Kernels of Practice](#) project, developed at Harvard to identify routines, activities, techniques and exercises from successful intervention programs that are easy to learn and implement. Schools can then implement these components in different contexts without having to invest great resources.

Given the central role of the educational staff, the Committee calls for increasing school staff awareness of their own behavior as a model impacting students and SEL. There is need to ensure ongoing training, mentoring and support on these issues for all adults in the school environment, both educational and administrative staff.

3.2. Incorporating SEL into teaching the various disciplines

The Committee recommends incorporating SEL into the teaching of the various curriculum subjects, such as mathematics and science, civics, literature, history, art, and physical education. Incorporating SEL into the teaching routine will give students opportunities to practice SEL in a supportive environment and integrate it with learning in different fields. In our report we expand on programs from various countries and on similar efforts underway in the Israeli education system.

The Committee recommends collaboration between various entities within the education system in order to achieve optimal integration of SEL in teaching all subject matters in the curriculum. It also recommends increasing awareness of SEL and of the many opportunities for integrating it into various classes. For example:

- Science and mathematics classes can be utilized for collaborative learning and developing a sense of competence and efficacy, which in turn can increase students' motivation.
- Civics classes are highly suitable and should be used to develop SEL components relating to the civic space and relationships between different groups in society. It is particularly important to allow time to discuss complex issues while ensuring a respectful and culturally sensitive approach.

- Disciplines such as history, literature or art serve as a natural platform for cultivating and acquiring important aspects of SEL, such as self-awareness and awareness of others, coping with emotions that such topics often evoke, and cultivating respectful dialogue.
- Classes in the visual arts and dance can enable identifying emotions and enhancing empathy, group work, and acquaintance with different cultures. Alongside increasing sensitivity to others, these can also develop students' sense of belonging and pride in their own culture.
- Physical education and sports can be utilized to promote skills related to students' understanding of their strengths and challenges, building a positive self-image, and the ability to persevere and cope with difficulty, success and failure. The group nature of many sports activities presents an opportunity to strengthen skills and attitudes regarding sportsmanship and collaboration with peers.
- We recommend developing supports for teachers to help integrate SEL into the various disciplines in the curriculum. Such supports and aids should be made available to teachers throughout all stages of training and professional development.

3.3. Dedicated lessons for acquiring and fostering SEL

SEL can be taught directly in dedicated classes; such lessons should become part of the core curriculum throughout Israel's entire educational system. Dedicated SEL lessons will allow students to learn emotional and social skills and develop positive self-image, values and mindsets, along with a constant link to topics that engage them in their academic, social and personal lives. The current "Life Skills Class" program designed and overseen by the Psychological Counselling Service division within the Ministry of Education has been part of the compulsory curriculum in Israel for years. The program is currently being revised to meet the updated goals of the Ministry of Education and the current vision of the future graduate.

The Committee, for its part, recommends various ways of leveraging existing infrastructure and knowledge to design dedicated SEL classes and increase their positive impact for all students:

- Dedicated classes will be developed in collaboration with the relevant Ministry of Education stakeholders to ensure coordinated development, cultivation, and implementation of all SEL components. These include, among other things, skills in various areas of life, worldviews, values, and civic involvement.
- A national program for SEL will be constructed. This program will be adapted for different groups in Israeli society based on language, religious affiliation, cultural

characteristics, and pedagogical orientations. Teaching will be based on the national program but schools will be given considerable autonomy in terms of content and teaching methods.

- The program will be adapted to the students' developmental stages; this will also factor in teaching and learning methods, such as in terms of the nature of activities and duration of sessions.
- The program will be flexible and modular to allow adaptation to different situations and conditions. It must include an extensive number of lesson plans and teaching aids to support adapting teaching to the specific needs of every school and classroom, as well as to any relevant information obtained about the school, for example, through education measurement and evaluation questionnaires.
- The teaching of dedicated lessons in the school must involve cooperation and informing of all education staff, in order to ensure the lesson is relevant to the classroom and that its content affects all educational activities in the school.
- It is essential to select teaching staff who are able to deal with the complexity and demands of SEL teaching. This team should be trained, supported, and given as many supports and means as possible to help it fulfill its role.
- Schools will be able to design and offer their own programs to promote SEL. These programs will be assessed and approved if they meet the goal of promoting SEL among all students in the school.
- Designing the national program for SEL and the alternative school programs must be supported by accompanying studies and formative and summative evaluations.

3.4. Intervention programs

In addition to the aforementioned channels, SEL can be promoted among students through explicit intervention programs.

Literature in the field provides valid evidence of the positive impact of many programs for promoting SEL, especially in the United States. The most effective programs are those trying to encompass the school-wide experience and which combine several components, such as direct implementation of skills and other SEL attributes, training teaching staff, and introducing activities to create a safe school climate and a good learning and social experience. Because effective programs implement several components simultaneously, it is difficult to identify the most effective and essential components of any program.

In this regard, it should be noted that according to a Committee member, his close examination of all the meta-reviews of SEL programs found solid evidence that such programs are effective

only when they include training and support of the educational teams' teaching practices and promoting a supportive social and learning environment **in addition** to direct acquisition of skills.

Based on research in this field, it appears that the most effective programs meet the following criteria (abbreviated as "SAFE"):

- **Sequenced** – Training and learning are built gradually and continuously as a "step by step" process.
- **Active** – The program combines active student learning that includes practicing skills and other components of SEL.
- **Focus** – The program devotes specific time to developing each attribute of SEL that is taught.
- **Explicit** – The program defines the social-emotional skills and other aspects of SEL that it seeks to promote.

It is important to stress that the fact that intervention programs have been found effective in studies conducted in other countries (mainly the United States) does not guarantee that they are suitable for Israel or that their implementation will be successful. Therefore, the Committee has refrained from recommending specific programs as suitable for implementation in Israel. Instead, the Committee has chosen to emphasize the **SAFE** criteria. Additional considerations that must be taken into account when selecting or developing intervention programs for a local educational framework and the general educational system include the following:

- The choice of program should reflect the needs and goals of the local education processes. It is therefore important to begin defining the objectives and means relevant to the local context and examining the feasibility of implementing the program. Involving as many stakeholders as possible in this process (teachers, parents, students) may increase active involvement and provide a sense of ownership to contribute to the success of the process.
- The program should be appropriate to the developmental stage, language, culture and values of the students, as well as to the educational vision of the school and its programs for improving the school climate.
- The program should emphasize preparing the participating educational staff and accompanying and supporting them throughout its duration.
- If an existing program is selected, any empirical evidence regarding its effectiveness in achieving its defined objectives should be examined, as should the relevance of these

findings to the local context. If a new program is selected, it should be evaluated with an appropriate empirical study.

- The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Education act to promote intervention programs that will be studied by valid empirical means, thereby establishing a knowledge base regarding the effectiveness of programs in Israel's educational system. This process should emphasize the need to adapt interventions to different population groups (Arab, ultra-Orthodox, religious, and others) and to address the culture, values, and needs of students in each.

3.4.1. Intervention programs for students with special needs and gifted students

Understanding the need for SEL and its importance for the optimal advancement of students with disabilities as well as gifted students, the Committee has devoted a chapter to intervention programs tailored to these groups. The Committee reviewed examples of evidence-based research on intervention programs designed for children and adolescents with relatively common disabilities. In a separate sub-chapter, the Committee addressed the issue of gifted students who may benefit from programs tailored to their specific characteristics. A review of academic work suggests that SEL programs may contribute to promoting the optimal functioning of such students with diverse needs. Furthermore, they can serve as an additional tool for promoting integration and inclusion for all students (with and without disabilities) and contribute to creating a caring and inclusive school community. This is particularly relevant in light of the Education Law reform, which integrates students with special needs into mainstream education frameworks, while increasing the schools' capacity for inclusion and providing a range of responses to diverse needs.

The Committee recommends that the process of selecting, planning, and implementing intervention programs for students with special needs take into account their unique characteristics and the nature of their integration into the educational framework. In this context, too, it is important to promote partnerships within the system and to train and support the educational and therapeutic teams on SEL. In addition, a comprehensive evaluation should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of intervention programs for all partners: students with and without disabilities, gifted students, the school system, and students' families.

4. Supportive conditions for the cultivation and acquisition of SEL

The various channels for promoting SEL must have supporting conditions in order to achieve optimal results. Following the main principles outlined above, this part of the Committee's report

presents several measures the Committee believes are critical for successfully implementing SEL in the educational system.

4.1. Selection, training and professional development of teachers

There is a consensus that professional development, training and support of the educational staff are crucially important in implementing SEL. The Ministry of Education, therefore, plays a key role in promoting the comprehensive implementation of such programs through the allocation of resources and establishment of appropriate mechanisms. These educators' training and support activities may be carried out by a variety of non-governmental organizations specializing in this area. The Ministry of Education, however, must define and commit from its own budget funding streams to ensure significant and long-term implementation processes of SEL.

In addition, the Committee recommends the following:

- Screening of pre-service teachers should include assessing their abilities and potential in the field of SEL. This requires developing reliable and valid tools, which are not yet available.
- SEL content and experience should be incorporated into the curriculum of pre-service teachers and the professional development of working teachers, especially those engaged in teaching and implementing SEL. Additionally, teachers should have opportunities for specializing in this subject as part of a dedicated study track.
- Special attention should be given to the training and support of principals/administrators, as well as supervisors and relevant senior ministry staff, to ensure all concerned are aware of the importance of SEL, promote its implementation in the educational system, and support the work of educational staff.
- Accessible training and instructional tools (including online) should be developed in order to assist in the training and support of all educational teams and staff in the system. Additionally, these tools may help foster SEL-focused learning communities of teachers.
- SEL for teachers should be supported and encouraged as a means of helping with job-related stress. This may be done through various programs, such as those for stress reduction, mindfulness, mentalization, and personal/interpersonal awareness. Fostering SEL among teachers is particularly important. Teachers lacking both awareness of their own or their students' emotional processes, as well as the means to regulate these, will have great difficulty teaching quality SEL and serving as models for appropriate social-emotional processes.

- Routine feedback and formative assessments of principals and teachers should include direct reference to their own SEL in terms of their relationships with peers, ability to promote SEL in their students, and their capacity to effectively handle stress at work.

4.2. Parental involvement

One of the major principles mentioned earlier emphasizes partnership and cooperation between all stakeholders. Research and theory alike stress the contribution of a successful school-family partnership to the effective promotion of SEL. This partnership has three main components:

- Recognizing that parents and educators share a responsibility in promoting SEL.
- Effective communication between educators and parents.
- Offering parents various options for being involved in SEL, within the understanding and accommodation of the diversity of families.

Each of these three components is important both for implementing specific programs in school, as well as the school's general approach to promoting SEL. To best meet these principles, the Committee recommends the following:

- The school should communicate to parents in a clear and simple manner the knowledge supporting the importance of SEL for their children's adjustment and success both in the present and in the future. Parental understanding reduces resistance and ultimately promotes partnership.
- Parents should be involved in school initiatives to promote SEL by encouraging their participation in decision-making processes.
- Both pre-service teachers and working school staff should receive professional training on working with parents to promote SEL. Additionally, schools should appoint specific staff to oversee promoting SEL in general and working with parents in this area specifically. The designated staff members should be the resident experts on parental involvement in SEL and will serve as an address for questions and advice about it.
- Schools will offer a "menu" of a variety of ways for parents to get involved in SEL activities, based on an understanding of the differences between families. This will allow parents to choose the method of involvement that suits their needs, constraints, strengths, values, and preferences. Similarly, each school should select an appropriate range of SEL activities according to its resources, needs, goals, cultural orientation (e.g., level of religiosity) and so on. Including online activity may increase parental involvement.

4.3. Assessment and evaluation

There is broad consensus on the importance of assessment and evaluation within efforts to promote SEL. These are the Committee's recommendations on this issue:

- Summative and formative evaluations and feedback processes and tools should be used to help schools identify the social-emotional needs of students, and to examine the extent to which actions to promote SEL have achieved their objectives.
- Assessment tools should be selected and developed with a direct connection to the desired education goals of SEL in mind. Such tools must also be anchored in appropriate conceptual and theoretical frameworks, adapted to the characteristics of Israel's education system, and to the needs of the various stakeholders such as policy makers, decision makers and educators.
- It is recommended to create a database of instruments and resources for school use, with materials that should be accessible in Hebrew, Arabic and any other language of importance to the Israeli public. This will be based on cataloguing existing tools in accordance with the goals of the Israeli educational system, alongside categorizing needs and identifying potential areas for investing in adapting tools or developing original tools.
- Selection and development of instruments should be supported by systematic psychometric research, which will be more effective if carried out in collaboration of field staff, Ministry of Education staff, researchers and any other relevant bodies. Mutual and efficient sharing of research and data between the Ministry of Education and scholars can advance research and partnerships, and both sides are encouraged to make their information mutually accessible.
- The steps outlined above should be supported by incorporating SEL assessment into teacher training and through developing ongoing support mechanisms, such as school assessment coordinators, to facilitate assessment and evaluation within the school.
- Ethical criteria for use of information and data must be formulated, with special attention to the cultural-social diversity of Israeli society.
- The Committee recommends to avoid using assessment and evaluation systems designed for accountability and high stakes testing for the purpose of assessing SEL.

4.4 Systemic implementation and dissemination

The existing literature on issues of systemic implementation has provided an important knowledge basis for the Committee's work. The chapters and recommendations in this document reflect insights driven by understanding the current difficulties and limitations of

implementation, dissemination, and scaling up of programs. In this light, the following should be emphasized:

- The educational vision for the integration of SEL programs should be determined by the Ministry of Education but be adapted to local context. This process should be done in collaboration with as many local stakeholders as possible, such as principals, teachers, parent organizations, local governance authority, and others. Broad coalitions can make programs more relevant and create mechanisms to support development, learning and implementation. The Ministry should allocate resources for local adaptation processes.
- The existing workload and the limited resources available to school administrators and teachers is a major challenge that must be taken seriously. Israel's educational system suffers from a multiplicity of goals and a heavy burden on teachers and administration. Therefore, incorporating new programs in schools must come with decisions on what may be given up in order to free up time, personnel, and financial resources. The process should also examine how the goals of the SEL program fit into other school goals, and devise ways to avoid or resolve any conflicts between these goals.
- One way to encourage implementation is identifying programs that succeed in a small number of schools and gradually scaling up (under close monitoring and research) to introduce them to more and more schools. This method may help adapting successful programs to a wider range of cultural and social contexts, and potentially form an important motivational support mechanism as well.

Finally, it must be remembered that SEL is not a magic solution to all individual and social problems. While it may certainly enhance the ability of school to promote personal well-being, interpersonal relationships and learning, it cannot be a solution to deep-seated problems related to poverty, domestic and social violence, exclusion of minority groups, and more. Therefore, SEL programs must be presented to the schools and public for what they are and in the context that suits them specifically, and not as a solution for other challenges the educational system must deal with.

Authors: Rami Benbenishty & Tali Friedman

Translation: Linda Yechiel

Editing: Batsheva So belman