

**Wilmette District 39:  
Community Review Committee**

Building Responsive Social-Emotional Learning through Strengthening Parent-Teacher Communication and Increasing Parent Understanding of and Engagement in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Instruction

**School Year 2021 - 2022**

*Report Category: Social/Emotional Learning*

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## **Acknowledgements:**

A special acknowledgement to all of the District 39 schools for distributing the parent perception survey, and to all the parents that expressed their views and perceptions about social-emotional learning through the survey.

A special thank you as well to Karen Van Ausdal, Senior Director of Practice at the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) for her time.

## I. Executive Summary

### A. Background

The purpose of the Community Review Committee (CRC) is to “advise the Board on specific strategies that help fulfill District 39's mission” (Wilmette Public Schools District 39. Community Review Committee. Retrieved April 5, 2022 from [Community Review Committee - Wilmette Public Schools District 39 - wilmette39.org](https://www.wilmette39.org/community-review-committee)). District 39’s mission is: “A Wilmette District 39 education engages, empowers, and inspires students to lead academically successful, socially responsible, compassionate, and purposeful lives.” (Wilmette Public Schools District 39. Mission Statement. Retrieved April 5, 2022 from [Mission Statement - Wilmette Public Schools District 39 \(wilmette39.org\)](https://www.wilmette39.org/mission-statement))

In support of this, the 2021-2022 CRC chose the topic, “Building Responsive Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) through Strengthening Parent-Teacher Communication and Increasing Parent Understanding of and Engagement in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Instruction.” The purpose of this report is to present research on parent perceptions of SEL, analyze how local districts communicate SEL resources and curricula to families, and explore national trends in family engagement strategies of school SEL programs. Finally, this report offers recommendations to District 39 with regard to strengthening parent-teacher communication in support of SEL. Our recommendations seek to promote improving parent-teacher communication in an effort to increase parent understanding and engagement in SEL for all District 39 students. As District 39 already recognizes the importance of SEL, this report will not further provide information documenting this.

Prior to the initial CRC meeting, Lindsay Anderson, CRC President, and Amy Wechsler Ross, CRC Vice President, met with Dr. Kari Cremascoli, Superintendent, and Katie Lee, Administrator of Curriculum and Instruction to review potential topic ideas targeted at a specific need within District 39. Ultimately, SEL was chosen in response to reviewing the current [Strategic Plan](#) goals as well as District 39 student and family needs. The uncertainty of pandemic times has brought changes to student social-emotional development and largely impacts the development of these foundational skills (Center for Reinventing Public Education, 2021).

Parents and caregivers are critical supports to student success. In order to best support a student’s learning, parents need to have both an awareness and understanding of what their student is learning. Through teacher emails, Friday newsletters, district-wide emails, and presentations, District 39 works to increase parent understanding of academic learning. Often left out of these communications are specific information regarding student SEL.

In consideration of multiple factors including the current social-emotional climate amidst a two-year pandemic, Goal 2 and Goal 4 of the [District Strategic Plan](#), and District 39’s vision for an “Inspired Community” (wilmette39.org, 2022), the CRC chose this topic. This topic further

explores parent understanding of SEL, the need to bridge parent-teacher communication in order to best support student social-emotional development, and methods to effectively communicate this information.

This topic is both reflective of the impact of the pandemic on students and reflective of the District's current priority to support SEL. Over the past two years, student mental and social-emotional well-being have been significantly impacted by the pandemic (Center for Reinventing Public Education, 2021). Apart from the pandemic, SEL is critical to:

- “1. Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
2. Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
3. Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.” (wilmette39.org, 2022)

SEL is the foundational process through which “all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.” (casel.org, 2021) Strengthening parent-teacher communication will positively impact District 39 students by reinforcing SEL development and skill generalization across all settings (i.e. home, school, and the community). Research demonstrates increased effectiveness of SEL programs when they are reinforced in a child's homelife (casel.org, 2022).

## **B. Process**

The CRC divided into three subcommittees. Each group determined specific recommendations relating to their research.

Group 1 researched parent perceptions of SEL by creating a survey to collect qualitative and quantitative feedback from the community. The survey was sent out to District 39 families and mentioned in school newsletters, emails from CRC members, and social media. Questions were created based on the knowledge and experience of Group 1 members which included Kelly Jackson, Highcrest Principal and Administrator for Social-Emotional Learning and Family Engagement, Becky Littmann, Central Principal, and parent representatives (Brian Yeh, Rachel Gold, and Eileen Richards).

Group 2 analyzed how other school districts in Illinois communicate SEL resources and curricula to families. Using a list of comparable districts provided by Dr. Kari Cremascoli (via Illinois School Report Card) as well as districts recommended by District 39 teaching professionals, information was gathered through website review of each of these districts, and examined from the lens of the members' professional expertise. Group members included, Sara Salomonsson, 1st Grade Teacher at Harper, Leo Krause, Communications Director, and parent representatives

Arielle Ruby (Licensed School Psychologist), Katie Magrino Voorhees (Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor), and Rekha Badlani.

Group 3 explored national trends in family engagement strategies of school SEL programs. Group 3 members included Hannah Deutsch, Learning Behavior Specialist at Highcrest, Katie Lee, Administrator for Curriculum and Instruction, and parent representatives Dana McLaughlin, Najah Musacchio (Pediatrician), and Marnie Van der Voort. The research was collected from various scholarly journals and educational organizations. The research sources included an interview with Karen Van Ausdal, Senior Director of Practice at Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as well as research from Panorama, Aspen Institute, Wallace Foundation, Education Week, and other scholarly sources. For a complete list of sources, please see the bibliography.

### **C. Finding and Conclusions**

To best understand how to build responsive SEL through bridging parent-teacher communication, we extensively researched parent perceptions on SEL, analyzed how local districts communicate learning resources and curricula to families, and explored national trends in family engagement strategies of school SEL programs. Our findings demonstrate that parent understanding of SEL within District 39 is moderately low and parent interest in furthering their understanding is high. Additionally, our findings corroborate the significant impact the pandemic has had on SEL, furthering the need for increased student support.

A year-long analysis of research, surveys, and interviews led to the following conclusions:

1. District 39 parents largely agree that SEL is important and that it supports academic success.
2. District 39 parent understanding of SEL components is moderately low although their interest in reinforcing SEL strategies at home is high.
3. District 39 parents are interested in learning more about specific SEL strategies their children are learning in school, and want SEL resources through various modalities such as newsletter, online resource guide, symposiums, etc.
4. A comprehensive, dedicated SEL website is the most effective way to compile and share wellness resources with teachers, students, and parents.
5. Schaumburg School District 54 is the best local example of a comprehensive and easily accessible wellness website, and includes psychoeducational skill-building resources, curricular newsletters, community health programs, and district resources (e.g. mental health directory, parent courses).
6. Resources should be divided by age group to provide developmentally appropriate, targeted resources for students, parents, and teachers.
7. Expert opinion supports family-school partnerships as critical to SEL program success. When families and educators work together they can reinforce SEL skills.

8. Reinforcement of SEL behaviors across multiple settings improves skill acquisition in children.
9. Schools should ask parents about their expectations regarding SEL programming as well as their preferred communication strategies. This will allow schools to determine how to best plan SEL programs as well as the best way to communicate with families with differing needs.

Overall, the CRC finds that bridging the gap between parent-teacher communication with SEL will significantly benefit District 39 students and their families. This will further support building foundational skills that support academic success and social-emotional well-being.

#### **D. Recommendations for Action**

There are many ways to bridge the gap between parent and teacher communication and strengthen understanding of and engagement in SEL across District 39. The recommendations in this report suggest ideas for District 39 to affect change in the way parents understand and participate in their child's SEL.

The CRC recommends the following:

##### **Communication**

1. District 39 should develop a communication plan and strategy for sharing information with parents regarding SEL and what it looks like at school. This could include:
  - a. Plan for meaningful parent education events based on topics/themes from the parent survey. Among the suggested topics/themes are embracing the new normal post-pandemic, anxiety, and presentations that help outline, define, and tie into the CASEL core competencies and the District 39 social-emotional framework.
  - b. Develop a system for regular two-way electronic communication between teachers and parents to include connections between SEL at school and home, to support conversations between parents and children around SEL topics, and to support the efficacy of SEL by increasing generalization of skills across settings.
  - c. Consider utilization of the CASEL Family Partnerships Rubric to identify areas to continuously improve parent-teacher communication.
2. Develop strategies to empower students to become involved in the communication with parents regarding their own SEL and development (i.e. "I can" statements, progress reports, etc.).

##### **Parent Resources**

3. Create handouts for parents and caregivers that will be distributed at the classroom level based on the District's adopted curriculum to support parent understanding of the competencies, the skills covered, and the basic activities/lessons their children may experience in the classroom. District 39 can leverage similar resources created by other

districts as inspiration, but tailor to the specifics used in District 39. The parent resources may include a suggested reading list with information on how to support SEL at home, as well as supplemental activities/lessons that build on classroom learning and engage parents with their students to support the home-school partnership, when appropriate. This work serves both a programmatic and educational purpose.

4. District 39 is currently in the process of developing a comprehensive SEL website for students, families, and staff.
  - a. Website resources could be divided by age groups (Early Childhood, Elementary, Middle School/Junior High).
  - b. The website could establish an SEL Online Resource Library to be accessed by all stakeholders including families and staff.
  - c. The website could increase family-friendly resources that can be easily understood.
  - d. District 39 should identify strategies to increase traffic to the SEL Online Resource Library.

Content on the site may include:

- Current and archived Parent Education courses
- Newsletters that focus on what SEL skills and curricula are being taught in the classroom, along with talking points to reinforce SEL skills at home
- Mental health community resources (e.g. counseling centers and hotline information)
  - This may also include resources listed on the New Trier Township website
- Health and wellness videos for children, parents, and staff around topics such as anxiety, organization, and resiliency
- Psychoeducational skill-building videos, such as Cosmic Kids Yoga or GoZen
- Recommendations for psychoeducational story books (eg. Diane Albers, “A Little Spot” series)
- District assistance and support services, including information regarding free lunch and homelessness resources
- A directory of all mental health providers in the district

## **Engagement**

5. District 39 should engage parents in a variety of ways. This could include embedding programming in already established highly attended events such as Curriculum Night, Open House, parent/teacher conferences, book studies, webinars, and parent education events.
6. District 39 should develop a way to assess the effectiveness of parent engagement in SEL, using the results to assess satisfaction and inform future plans or adjustments to make efforts worth the time invested.

## **II. Research Summaries and Strategic Recommendations:**

In alignment with District 39's mission, vision, and current priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan, the CRC considered the feasibility of strengthening parent-teacher SEL communication. Leveraging current resources will be critical as significant SEL work has already been done to create District 39's Social Emotional Framework. Ongoing work continues to further adaptation and implementation of the CASEL competencies and Responsive Classroom (Department of Curriculum and Instruction memo, September 2021). Many of the above recommendations can be incorporated into the existing work led by the District 39 SEL committee. If needed, future Community Review Committees can provide feedback on the materials prior to distributing to the broader community.

Recommendations were broken into three subcategories:

- (1) Improve communication by developing a communication plan and strategy for sharing information with parents and develop strategies to help students communicate with parents.
- (2) Develop additional parent resources including handouts, reading lists, supplemental activities/lessons, and further develop the comprehensive SEL District 39 website.
- (3) Improve parent engagement by embedding programming in existing events and assessing the effectiveness of parent engagement in SEL to continuously improve family partnerships.

Our year-long study on parent-teacher communication has yielded the following research in support of our recommendations:

### **Parent Perceptions of Social-Emotional Learning**

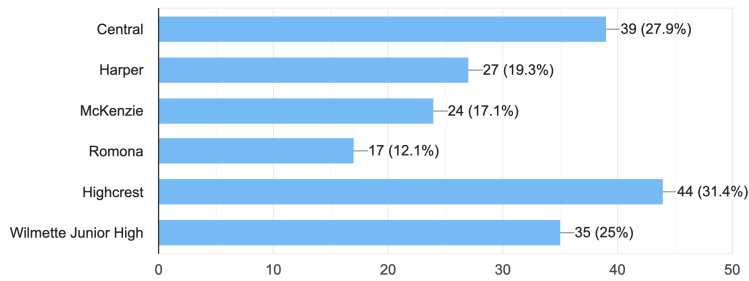
To best understand parent perceptions of SEL, a short survey was developed and presented in school newsletters, emails from CRC members, and social media. To elicit as many responses as possible, the survey was limited to 11 questions, including a question on which school(s) were represented in the response. Six questions were rated on a scale (e.g., Strongly Disagree to Agree), and four questions allowed free text responses.

The parent survey received 140 responses (representing 186 District 39 students) that were relatively evenly split among all District 39 schools. Per School Enrollment data on April 12, 2022, a total of 3318 students are enrolled in District 39. This response rate (5%) falls within a typical range for District 39 surveys. Results should be interpreted with caution as respondents may not be representative of the general District 39 parent population; for example, parents with stronger feelings about SEL may have been more likely to participate.



What school(s) do your child(ren) currently attend?

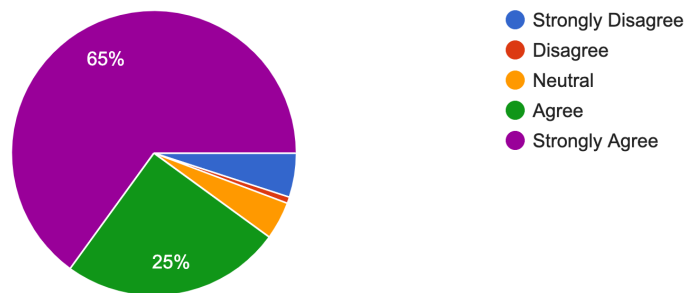
140 responses



Parents overwhelmingly agreed that SEL is a valuable component of the curriculum and that SEL supports academic success.

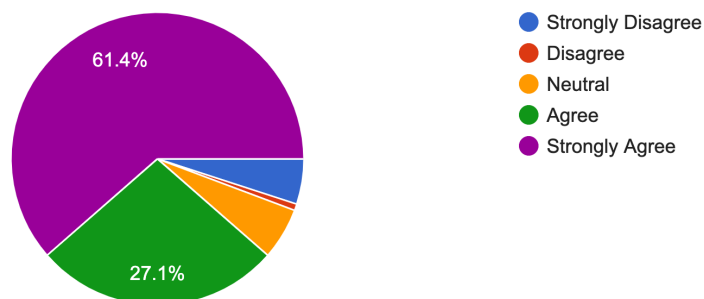
Social-emotional learning is a valuable component of the curriculum for PK-8 students.

140 responses



Social-emotional learning supports academic success in PK-8 students.

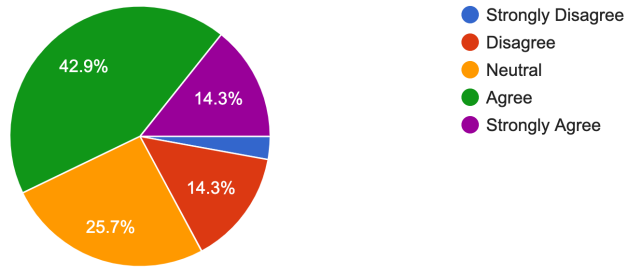
140 responses



There was comparatively lower understanding of the components of SEL instruction and especially the strategies used by District 39 teachers.

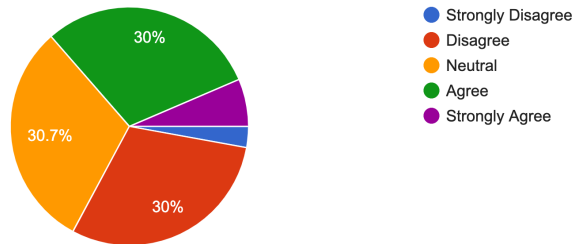
I understand the components (i.e. lessons, competencies, learning objectives) of social-emotional learning.

140 responses



I understand the strategies my children's teachers use to support social-emotional learning.

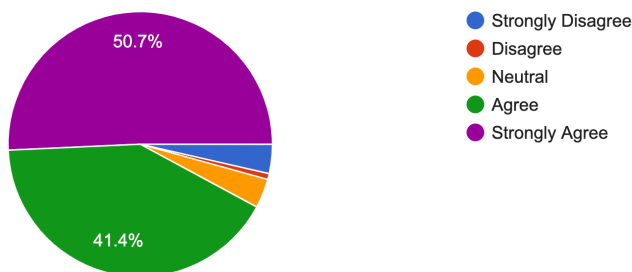
140 responses



Nevertheless, the vast majority of parents expressed interest in reinforcing SEL strategies at home.

I would like to reinforce social-emotional learning strategies at home.

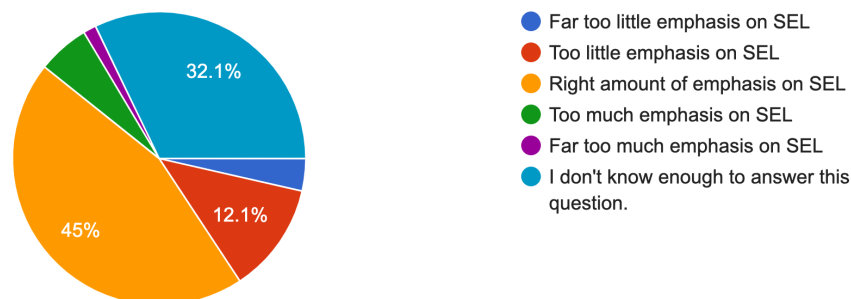
140 responses



Parents generally believe that District 39 puts the right amount of emphasis on SEL, but it is notable that a large proportion of parents do not know enough to form an opinion.

In your opinion, how much emphasis does D39 put on social-emotional learning (SEL)?

140 responses



In response to a question on how children’s needs for SEL have changed as a result of COVID-19, a few themes emerged, including that children have had less time to interact and connect with peers, and that many children have experienced anxiety and uncertainty. Many parents noted that COVID-19 did not change the need for SEL, in particular noting that the need for SEL has always been high.

Parents expressed a desire to learn more about many different SEL topics, including self-management; relationship skills; diversity, equity, and inclusion; bullying; and how SEL shows up at different times of the day. Many parents noted that they would like to learn about “all topics” and especially highlighted wanting to learn more about what is happening inside District 39 schools.

When asked about what methods of communication they preferred, email was by far the most prevalent response. Other responses included short videos, Zoom, in-person, phone call, and text. In relation to frequency, “weekly” was mentioned more often than “monthly.”

### **Current SEL Communication Trends by Local School Districts**

The purpose of Group 2’s research was to analyze how local districts communicate SEL and curricula to families. To focus the study, the following questions were utilized:

- *What are surrounding and other similar districts doing to engage parents in social-emotional learning?*
- *How do parents best receive information regarding curriculum, instruction, and at-home implementation?*

The study examined the SEL resources provided by district-level websites. Districts were chosen using two criteria: those with similar demographics (e.g., New Trier feeder schools, enrollment numbers, percent low-income) according to the Illinois State Report Card

(illinoisreportcard.com, 2021) and those recommended by other teaching professionals.

Skill-building and psychoeducational concepts were examined in order to determine their alignment with the CASEL competencies, and the accessibility of the content to promote family engagement.

The research included 25 school districts<sup>1</sup> and findings were based solely on information discovered on the districts' main websites. The most accessible and well-developed resources were dedicated as educational for parents with the purpose to promote at-home learning for families to help support their children, including parent education courses, newsletters, psychoeducational resources for students and parents, community resources (e.g. homelessness, food banks, mental health resources, COVID-19 resources), and directories for access to school mental health workers.

Of the 25 districts studied:

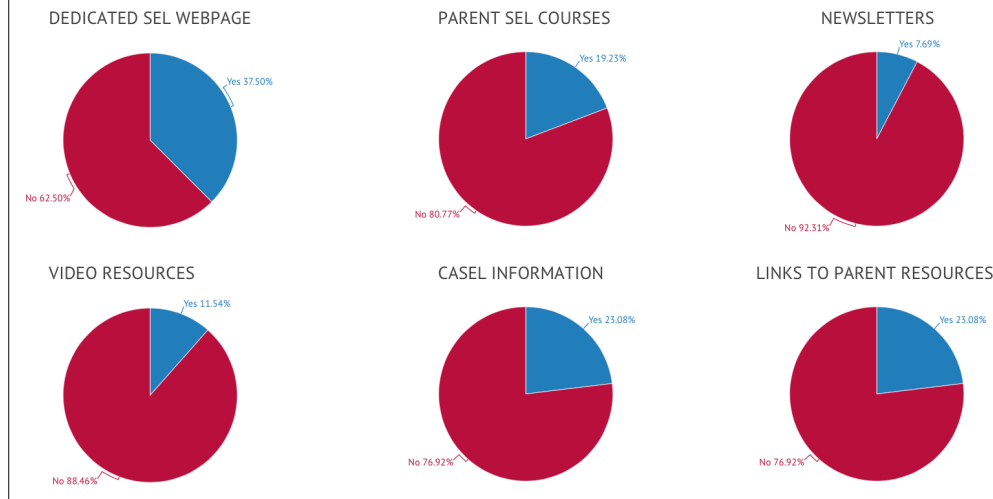
- Eight districts had dedicated SEL websites (32%).<sup>2</sup>
  - Five of the eight schools provided parent educational courses in alignment with two or more SEL competencies (casel.org, 2022) (Schaumburg, Winnetka, Hinsdale, St. Charles, and Naperville).
  - Two districts (Schaumburg and Naperville) had accessible newsletters for parents on their sites.
  - District-directed video resources were accessible to parents on two of the sites (Winnetka and Schaumburg) and outside video resources (e.g. mindfulness videos; yoga; social skills videos; SEL read aloud books) were found on three of the sites (Winnetka, Schaumburg, and St. Charles).
  - The final category examined the various links provided on their website. Six of the districts provided links to CASEL (Winnetka, Schaumburg, Hinsdale, St. Charles, Glencoe, and Naperville) along with additional parent resource links (Family Action Network; Erica's Lighthouse; books and articles by topic). Only Schaumburg included resources specifically for students to access.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A and B

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A

## PEER DISTRICTS AND SEL



Of the districts researched, Schaumburg District 54’s Wellness Space provided the most comprehensive psychoeducational concepts and skill-building resources. The wellness website organized resources into groups aimed towards students, families, and staff. Additionally, student resources were organized by age in order to differentiate between developmentally appropriate materials (Early Childhood-Grade 2, Grades 3-6, and Junior High students). The wellness site also provided links for families to community resources such as mental health providers, food programs, COVID-19 resources, and community health programs. A directory of all mental health workers in the district was also listed on the site. Resources for staff focused on promoting self-care, including insurance and benefit information, affirmative and encouraging wellness videos, ideas for supporting students, and links to the specific SEL curriculum used in the classroom.

Research findings indicate that a comprehensive website is the most effective manner to engage parents in a SEL partnership between home and school. The websites serve as a proactive resource that may be utilized by parents seeking out additional resources to support their children’s social-emotional growth.

### **National Trends in Family Engagement Strategies of School SEL Programs**

Group 3 focused on exploring national trends in family engagement strategies of school SEL programs. Parent engagement is a common component of SEL programs. Expert opinion supports family-school partnerships as critical to SEL program success. As CASEL describes, “Families are children’s first teachers and essential to promoting social-emotional learning throughout a child’s life. When educators and families work together, they can build strong connections with each other that reinforce social-emotional skills developed in the home, in schools, and in their communities” (casel.org, 2022). A higher general level of parent-school engagement has been associated with academic achievement and stronger social-emotional skills

in multiple studies (Hill and Tyson 2009; El Nokali et al., 2010). From a developmental standpoint, reinforcement of behaviors across multiple settings improves skill acquisition in children. Evidence-based parenting programs have been shown to be associated with sustained improvements in parental well-being and child behavior (Gray GR et al., 2018).

However, there is a lack of research evaluating parent engagement components of SEL programs, which complicates strategy prioritization. There is limited evidence directly comparing differing partnership strategies, or determining whether the approach played a role in a positive program outcome. This evidence gap occurs on a background of a broad range of evidence strength for individual SEL programs, with corresponding wide array of prescribed levels of family partnership. Studies evaluating a particular SEL program's effectiveness may be limited by small effect size, lack of control groups, comparison studies, or lack of long term follow up. Results may not be reproducible in dissimilar student populations (e.g., higher socioeconomic status, older age). School districts use their expertise to adapt SEL programs to best local use, which further complicates the extrapolation of any study results.

### *Methods of Engagement*

There is a wide range of possible methods to engage parents in SEL, and the intensity of these efforts. Of the 33 leading SEL programs evaluated by the EASEL Lab from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, one prescribed an extensive level of partnership, 14 were comprehensive, 16 were moderate, and two prescribed no partnership (Jones SM et al., 2021). Many programs establish avenues for two-way communication with families. Parents may be asked which methods of communication they prefer. A variety of communication strategies may work best to reach families with differing needs. Schools may ask parents about their perceptions and expectations of SEL, to inform program planning. Materials may be provided in multiple languages.

Communication to parents may involve programmatic information (what are we doing at school and why?) and/or educational guidance (how can I best support my child's social-emotional growth?). Establishing a shared vocabulary helps promote consistency in discipline from school to home, and can improve parent understanding of program goals (Berman S et al., 2018). Programmatic information may include any plans to collect data, or the results of an analysis of the outcomes of an SEL program.

Schools may invite parents to come together to learn about SEL from a programmatic or educational standpoint. These seminars may be held in person and/or via webinar. Topics could be broad based, or focus on a specific behavioral/emotional challenge. Parents only may be invited, or some programs suggest children attend as well. Some schools invite expert speakers from the community or school, others have SEL program staff present. These communications could occur as a separate workshop series, a one-time event, or be embedded into already established high-attendance events like Open House or parent-teacher conferences. Schools may

also educate parents on the importance of free play and facilitate students' SEL by establishing after school play clubs, or by working to reduce barriers to recess and unstructured mixed-age after school play on school grounds (letgrow.org, 2022).

Many SEL programs recommend direct communication to parents regarding in school activities as another means of promoting partnership. This could involve emails from the teacher or district, featuring program information and/or social-emotional skill education. These communications may be most effective if curriculum-adjacent (e.g., “we learned about this today/this week, here is how you can reinforce these skills at home”). Schools may provide a website dedicated to SEL programming; communication to parents about the website and its features would be crucial to its effectiveness. These types of websites or emails may feature an SEL resource library, with links to parenting websites (e.g., The American Academy of Pediatrics); recommended parenting books; and/or a family reading list. Some schools may make the physical copies of books available for check out. Some SEL programs provide their own set of online parenting resources, which may include meditation exercises, methods of incorporating lessons into home use, or learning portals with online games, apps, worksheets, and reading materials.

Teachers may also communicate with parents on an individualized basis. They may email or send home constructive feedback about their child's growth or behavior in reference to the SEL program. SEL program goals and vocabulary may be incorporated into discussion during parent-teacher conferences. Student-led parent teacher conferences may be provided as an option to families. This structure could encourage the development of self-reflection and oral communication skills. Teachers may inquire about an individual student's strengths, goal setting, and what approaches have helped in the past at the start of the school year and/or at conferences.

Parents can also be included more directly in SEL programming. They may be invited to attend during in school SEL instruction, e.g., sitting in on “circle time.” Parents are commonly involved in SEL homework activities, which reinforce skills and teach families what the children are learning in school. Most often, this homework involves worksheets that the child shares or does with a parent. Some SEL programs provide activity bags<sup>3</sup> to bring home to do with the family, or story-based family workbooks<sup>4</sup>. One SEL program which assigns feelings to stuffed animal “Kimothis”, prescribes a “Kimothis sleepover” in which children bring home a particular feeling Kimothis, tell their family about it, and write a diary entry about it. Students may be assigned the Let Grow Project: “Go home and do something you've never done before (with parent permission) and write/draw about it. Walk the dog, run an errand, make a meal” (letgrow.org, 2022). This type of project helps support childhood resilience and confidence, and promotes a family conversation about risk taking, consistent with the District 39 Strategic Plan. This homework also messages parents about the important role this plays in SEL. A few SEL

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<sup>3</sup> Tools of the Mind, <https://toolsofthemind.org>

<sup>4</sup> Pax Good Behavior Game, <https://www.paxis.org/school-based-programming/>

programs feature home visits by program and/or school staff. Some also provide online portals that allow teachers to view their students at home executing program components.

### *Barriers to Engagement*

Limits to parent-school engagement may reduce the effectiveness of an SEL program and is associated with negative academic and behavioral outcomes. There are many potential barriers to engaging families in SEL. First, parents may be constrained by time and/or resources. Some parents may have a low sense of self-efficacy, or lack the confidence that their actions can influence their child's behavior or emotional state. There may be cultural or language barriers. Some parents may have a low level of trust for the school or feel they have a different value system.

Some parents may have a negative opinion of SEL. This can arise out of misunderstanding of the program and its goals (Prothrero, 2021). Schools should relay shared goals to families: parents generally want schools to teach kids about goal-setting, to approach challenges with optimism, believe in themselves and their abilities, and control their emotions. Communications should be clear, without the use of jargon. For example, parents support and understand teaching sensitivity to different cultures as opposed to "SEL." Specific SEL skills, such as goal-setting should be referenced, as opposed to more abstract concepts. Parents should be informed about indirect methods of teaching SEL skills, e.g., reading assignments, school policies, and good modeling behaviors. Parents may also believe an SEL program to be ineffective. Schools could share the established evidence basis with families, as well as evaluate and share results of their individualized program.

Teachers and staff may also be limited by time and competing educational demands. Prioritizing learning opportunities for staff that focus on partnering with families can improve family engagement (Woolf, 2021).

### *Evaluation of Engagement Strategies*

It would be helpful to conduct an assessment of parent-school engagement SEL strategies in District 39 in order to inform future decision making – what measures were worth the time and effort? Measured outcomes could include teacher/staff and parent satisfaction, and strategy effectiveness. For example, did the parents do the homework activities? Did they think it was useful? Did parents read the emails? How many attended the seminars? Did anyone buy or take out the books? How were student-led conferences? Did a shared vocabulary make a difference? Was there any difference in survey results at a later date regarding understanding of SEL programming? How many people accessed the SEL website?



### **III. Conclusions**

The CRC completed a study on parent understanding of SEL, the need to bridge parent-teacher communication in order to further support student social-emotional development, and methods to best communicate this information. Our year-long research indicated that District 39 parents generally agree that SEL is important and supports academic success; yet have a low understanding of SEL and are interested in learning more about SEL strategies. The CRC found that parents want SEL resources through various modalities such as newsletter, online resource guide, symposiums, etc. Though only 140 responses to the parent perception survey were received (representing 186 District 39 students), the sample is representative across all schools in the District.

In line with the development of District 39's SEL website for students, families, and staff, the CRC found that organizing the website by age with clearly labeled categories in targeted areas will be most beneficial to students and families. Additionally, the CRC found that expert opinion supports family-school partnerships as critical to SEL program success and that the reinforcement of SEL behaviors across multiple settings improves skill acquisition in children. In summary, bridging parent-teacher communication for SEL will help students better develop the foundational skills they need to support both academic and social-emotional growth.

The CRC believes that these recommendations will help support the District's mission, current strategic plan, and most importantly the District 39 students and families.

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## V. Appendices

### **Principal Newsletter Blurb to request parent input:**

The District 39 Community Review Committee (CRC), comprised of parents, teaching staff, and administrators from the district, chooses a focus area to research each year and provide recommendations to the School Board students for future work. This year's topic, which is a component of Goal 2 of the [District Strategic Plan](#), is *“Building Responsive Social-Emotional Learning through Strengthening Parent-Teacher Communication and Increasing Parent Understanding of and Engagement in SEL Instruction.”*

The CRC is hoping to gather parent input to help inform our recommendations in this area, and has developed THIS SURVEY to help inform parent understanding of social-emotional learning, how it is integrated into the academic school day, and how teachers and staff can best partner with families as the SEL framework is implemented across the grade levels.

### **Parent Perception Survey available to parents in January and February 2022:**

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is a component of instruction throughout each child's experience in District 39. District teachers and staff have begun the implementation of a social-emotional learning framework\* this school year centered around the five core CASEL competencies plus an additional competency focused on equity and inclusion. One key element to a well-rounded social-emotional learning framework is the connectedness and partnership between families, caregivers, and the community. Through this survey, we are looking to gather information about your understanding of social-emotional learning, how it is integrated into your child/children's school day, and how, as a district, we can work together with you to seamlessly integrate this into the District 39 experience.

\*Please visit the District 39 Social-Emotional Learning page to learn more about the competencies and our work in District 39:

<https://sites.google.com/wilmette39.org/socialemotionalllearning/social-emotional-learning>

What school(s) do your child(ren) currently attend? [Multi-Select]

- Central
- Harper
- McKenzie
- Romona
- Highcrest
- Wilmette Junior High

I understand the components (i.e. lessons, competencies, learning objectives) of social-emotional learning.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Social-emotional learning is a valuable component of the curriculum for PK-8 students

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Social-emotional learning supports academic success in PK-8 students

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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I understand the strategies my children’s teachers use to support social-emotional learning

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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I would like to reinforce social-emotional learning strategies at home

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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In your opinion, how much emphasis does D39 put on social-emotional learning (SEL)?

I don’t know enough to answer	Far too little emphasis on SEL	Too little emphasis on SEL	Right amount of emphasis	Too much emphasis on SEL	Far too much emphasis on SEL
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How have your children’s needs for social-emotional learning changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

[Optional free text response]

As a parent/guardian in D39, what social-emotional learning topics would you like to learn more about?

[Optional free text response]

As a parent/guardian, what methods of communication from your teachers (about SEL) would be most effective for you?

[Optional free text response]

Please share any additional feedback for District 39 regarding SEL.  
[Optional free text response]

## Peer Group List provided by Dr. Kari Cremascoli

### Peer Groups

#### **Referendum Peer Group**

Avoca SD 37  
Glencoe SD 35  
Glenview CCSD 34  
Golf ESD 67  
Kenilworth SD 38  
Lincolnwood SD 74  
Morton Grove SD 70  
Niles ESD 71  
Northbrook ESD 27  
Northbrook SD 28  
Northbrook/Glenview SD 30  
Skokie SD 73-5  
Sunset Ridge SD 29  
Wilmette SD 39  
Winnetka SD 36

#### **New Trier Feeders**

Avoca SD 37  
Glencoe SD 35  
Kenilworth SD 38  
Sunset Ridge SD 29  
Wilmette SD 39  
Winnetka SD 36

#### **Similar Districts (Enrollment, Low Income)**

Aptakisic-Tripp CCSD 102  
Deerfield SD 109  
Frankfort CCSD 157C  
Fremont SD 79  
Hinsdale CCSD 181  
Kildeer Countryside CCSD 96  
Libertyville SD 70  
Lincolnshire-Prairieview SD 103  
Park Ridge CCSD 64  
Wilmette SD 39

### **Appendix A: List of Illinois School Districts With Dedicated SEL Websites**

Winnetka D36 – <https://www.winnetka36.org/domain/265>

Schaumburg D54 – <https://sites.google.com/sd54.org/district-54-wellness-space/home>

Hinsdale D181 – <https://www.d181.org/parents/social-emotional-learning-for-academic-success-selas>

Glencoe D35 – <http://www.glencoeschools.org/SocialEmotionalWellness>

Sunset Ridge D29 –

[https://www.sunsetridge29.org/district/curriculum\\_instruction/social\\_emotional\\_learning](https://www.sunsetridge29.org/district/curriculum_instruction/social_emotional_learning)

Kildeer Countryside D96 – <https://www.kcsd96.org/curriculum/social-emotional-learning-sel>

Naperville D203 – <https://www.naperville203.org/domain/1379>

### **Appendix B: Peer Districts With No Dedicated SEL Website**

Avoca D37

Glenview D34

Golf ESD67

Kenilworth D38

Lincolnwood D74

Morton Grove D70

Niles ESD 71

Northbrook ESD27

Northbrook D28

Northbrook/Glenview D30

