



OUR TAKE

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As social and emotional learning takes center stage, professional learning plays an important supporting role

Learning Forward is exploring ways to deepen our collective understanding about social and emotional learning and, in particular, its implications for professional learning. How can educators best be supported to assess and promote the development of students' social and emotional skills?

To that end, Learning Forward has joined with The Wallace Foundation as a dissemination partner to increase awareness of and share resources about the research, strategies, and professional learning supports related to social and emotional learning.

We will explore a variety of resources in future issues of *The Learning Professional* to help members and colleagues understand social and emotional learning, starting with a new Wallace Foundation-commissioned report about a critical first step: how to meet federal evidence and funding requirements.

Simply put, social and emotional learning is “the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2017).

Education systems across the country are integrating social and

emotional learning into their work, from state and district strategic plans to classroom instruction, because students' social and emotional learning supports and facilitates their mastery of academic content and prepares them with life skills that will lead to future successes.

There is strong evidence that social and emotional learning can contribute positively to the academic success of students and their ability to navigate challenges and develop supportive networks, leading to improved school culture and relationships (Durlak et al., 2011). To continue this momentum, it is important to understand how to support and fund social and emotional learning programs.

A new report by RAND and The Wallace Foundation, *Social and Emotional Learning Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review* (Grant et al., 2017), guides educators and leaders in selecting and funding social and emotional learning programs under the new federal ESSA legislation. While there are no specific mentions of social and emotional learning in ESSA, states, districts, and schools still want their programs to be supported under the ESSA legislation evidence requirements. The report addresses this need.

The report found that:

1. ESSA supports social and emotional learning through several different funding streams.
2. Numerous social and emotional

learning interventions meet the ESSA evidence requirements.

3. Educators in elementary schools and urban communities have the most options for social and emotional learning interventions that meet ESSA requirements.
4. Interpersonal competencies are the most common outcomes positively affected in studies of evidence-based interventions.

The RAND research team found that 60 recently evaluated social and emotional learning interventions in K-12 public schools in the U.S. meet ESSA evidence requirements, suggesting there is a range of options for meeting your school or district needs with programs that meet the evidence requirements.

One recommendation that speaks to professional learning efforts is to take advantage of flexibility regarding programs that have a strong rationale and an ongoing evaluation if local needs cannot be met by interventions with stronger evidence.

The report also offers recommendations on how to leverage existing funding streams to support social and emotional learning programs and, in alignment with Learning Forward's recent ESSA advocacy work, calls for a consistent focus on measuring impact.

Of particular interest to Learning Forward members and colleagues is how this guidance relates to professional



For more about the Wallace Foundation social and emotional learning efforts, visit www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/social-and-emotional-learning/pages/default.aspx.

learning supports. The researchers found that many social and emotional learning programs that have a positive impact on students' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (such as communication and collaboration) have a professional learning component.

The report recommends that states, districts, and schools “provide professional development and other supports to build educators’ capacity to gather and use evidence” and notes that an appropriate use of Title II funds is professional development for teachers and school leaders, including for social and emotional learning instruction and integration of social and emotional learning into academic instruction (Grant et al., 2017, p. 23).

The Wallace Foundation and RAND have published both a full report and a concise, easily accessible brief with recommendations for educators and policymakers. The full report includes tools to support a rationale for program selection and

funding, such as a sample logic model illustrating short- and long-term outcomes of social and emotional learning programs.

The report also references reports that have reviewed and summarized relevant literature and resources that can be used in support of social and emotional learning-related professional learning, coaching, and capacity building through professional learning communities.

Other reports commissioned by The Wallace Foundation are also excellent resources. For instance, *Navigating SEL From the Inside Out* by Stephanie Jones (a Learning Forward conference presenter) is a practical guidebook for school and out-of-school providers.

REFERENCES

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