CHAPTER 1

The Current Status of Social and Emotional Learning

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What do we want for our children and young people? Many parents, caregivers, teachers, and mentors would likely respond to this question by saying they hope children will grow up to be happy and successful in whatever they do, although these hopes can be realized in several different ways. If we develop a list of more specific goals for all children, suppose, as children develop, they do the following:

- Learn how to manage and express their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in effective ways.
- Feel supported and accepted by their peers and the adults with whom they interact.
- Develop a positive but realistic sense of self and their abilities.
- Develop and maintain healthy relationships with peers and adults.
- Know how to listen to and communicate effectively with diverse others.
- Feel challenged to do their best in whatever they undertake.
- Learn how to persevere and deal with challenges, stress, and setbacks.
- Understand their needs, emotions, motivations, and goals in different situations.
- Appreciate the value of education and lifelong learning.
- Learn how to resolve minor or major conflicts peacefully without aggression, violence, or doing any harm to others.

- Recognize how to advocate for themselves, when to seek help from others, when to offer others help, and when working with others is necessary to achieve personal or collective goals.
- Understand how to make decisions that avoid undue risk to themselves or others.
- Act honestly and ethically.
- Demonstrate empathy and compassion for others.
- Recognize that working with others different from themselves presents not only ways to achieve collective goals but also opportunities for new growth and understanding.
- Feel connected to their family and community and are motivated and able to contribute to the betterment of their local and global society.
- Encounter environments that allow them to practice and apply their abilities in different situations.
- Live in communities that protect them from harm and foster their development.
- Are given opportunities to express their opinion and offer input into matters that affect their lives and their communities.
- Encounter multiple opportunities to use their talents and resources and show leadership in different ways.
- Succeed in academics, relationships, family life, community involvement, professional endeavors, and overall life.

Are these goals attainable? Our answer is a definite *yes!*

We believe that social and emotional learning (SEL) is one effective way to increase the chances that all young people reach these goals (and perhaps some others). The over 1,000 manuscript pages that make up this volume are devoted to explaining how to attain what many parents and others wish for young people.

What Is SEL?

SEL, a worldwide scientific enterprise focused on children, youth, and adults, is dedicated to fostering healthy development and positive outcomes by creating environments, programs, learning opportunities, and policies that foster a range of intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies. SEL can be broadly defined as the "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" (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2020). To reach these goals, SEL efforts are designed to develop *social and emotional competencies* (SECs) that involve the coordination of cognition, affect, and behavior to help people achieve specific tasks and positive developmental outcomes in diverse social and cultural contexts (Mahoney et al., 2021). CASEL emphasizes that both intrapersonal *and* interpersonal competencies are important and interconnected and has advocated for developing these competencies in five broad domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, social relationships, and responsible decision making.

Of course, positive developmental outcomes may emerge under natural conditions for many young people because of positive caregiving and high-quality early educational experiences, but SEL is designed to maximize the possibilities of growth for all, beginning in early childhood and continuing across the lifespan. SEL is not a panacea and cannot guarantee the goals listed at the beginning of this chapter will be realized for all, but it is one effective strategy that can be applied to help maximize the potential of those on whom it is focused. To be successful, efforts to foster SEL cannot focus exclusively on what children and youth can do as individuals. They must also involve what adults can do to assist them because positive developmental outcomes depend on the characteristics of the environments that surround young people throughout their lives. Although the skills that any child possesses are important, they cannot be nurtured or developed fully without the presence of environmental conditions (at home, at school, and in their community) that foster a range of skills and that provide opportunities for their practice and application in multiple contexts (Mahoney et al., 2021; Weissberg et al., 2015). Therefore, it is important to create and sustain supportive environments that not only protect young people from potential harm but also foster their positive growth and development. To accomplish this, SEL research, practice, and policy should be coordinated to give all children a chance to realize their full potential. This can be done through a variety of means described throughout this volume.

Our purpose in this chapter is fourfold. First, we provide an overview of the strong scientific basis of SEL, discuss the different terminology that has been used in reference to SEL, and indicate how several other major fields of research and practice overlap with SEL. Second, we discuss the major developments that have occurred in the field over the past decades and after publication of the first edition of our *Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning* (Durlak et al., 2015). Third, we summarize several themes that shape current SEL research and practice, and require more attention in the future; and, fourth, we end with an overview of the organization and contents of this volume.

The Scientific Basis of SEL

SEL should not be considered a fad or an ideological movement because there is an extensive and credible scientific basis for the value of various SECs for positive development and adjustment. Research evidence

is present in four different types of studies involving child and adolescent populations. First, there is considerable correlational evidence that SECs are positively related to better personal, social, and academic outcomes, and negatively related to adjustment problems (Hukkelberg et al., 2019). Second, there is predictive evidence from longitudinal studies that various SECs assessed in childhood and adolescence are significantly related to a variety of later indices of adjustment (Taylor et al., 2017). SECs are also predictive of academic, personal, and employment success in adulthood, including outcomes such as higher graduation rates, lower rates of school dropout, less delinquency and crime, fewer mental health problems, and a more successful employment history (Heckman & Kautza, 2012; Jones et al., 2015; Moffitt et al., 2011). Third, there is substantial evidence from school-based inventions that efforts designed to enhance SECs are associated with improved academic, personal, and social outcomes (see Durlak & Mahoney, Chapter 3, this volume). Fourth, among those studies assessing such associations, there is evidence that the promotion of SECs mediates both positive and negative outcomes attained in experimental SEL interventions (Domitrovich et al., 2017; also see Barnes et al., Chapter 28, this volume). Overall, the scientific literature that has appeared in many countries around the world indicates that SECs are important components of healthy development and that their promotion is linked to several indices of positive adjustment and success in life.

Basic Terminology

With respect to terms for SECs, there is a difference between having a competency, which refers to the *capacity* to do something effectively, and the actual demonstration of this competency through behavior. In other words, there is a difference between being able to do something and doing it. Often a person's emotions, motivations, and goals interact with the circumstances of a particular context to influence whether a competency one possesses results in the successful execution of a skill. Some of the terms that have been used in the literature in reference to what are targeted in SEL programs or interventions—SECs—are *intrapersonal and*

interpersonal competencies (or skills), *personal and social skills*, *21st-century skills*, *noncognitive skills*, and *soft skills* (and these do not exhaust all the possibilities) (cf. Berg et al., 2017; Jones & Doolittle, 2017). For ease of discussion, however, we use the former three terms interchangeably. Although each report should be examined for distinctive differences, for the most part, the previous terminology refers to intrapersonal and interpersonal skills that have been associated with positive development.

Over time and across different disciplines, alternative terms have appeared with respect to SEL. For example, *social emotional education* is the term used in several European countries instead of SEL (see Cefai & Simões, Chapter 34, this volume), and through the efforts and leadership of the World Health Organization (WHO), the alternative term *life skills education* or *life skills training* has appeared and influenced many efforts around the world. The WHO (1997) defines *life skills* as "a group of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner" (p.17). The correspondence between life skills and SEL is obvious.

Multidisciplinary Contributions to SEL

Figure 1.1 illustrates four major disciplines (and others may be noted) that have developed concurrently with SEL or have sometimes predated it and deserve attention because each of these disciplines has made substantial contributions to research and practice in SEL. In different ways and to differing degrees, these fields have produced many successful interventions that qualify as SEL but are described with a different label or designation; that is, programs developed in these areas are not called SEL but instead are identified as efforts at prevention, mental health promotion, character education, or positive youth development.

However, for our purposes, the important thing to keep in mind is not the title or label attached to any program or intervention, but whether its major intent is to promote
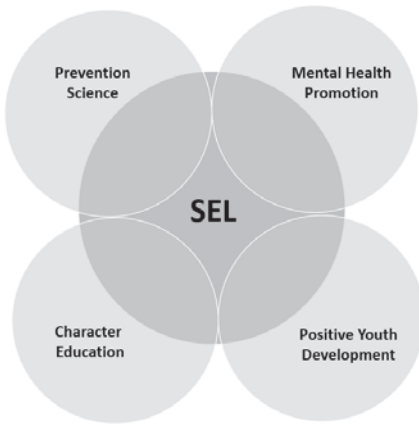
FIGURE 1.1. Four major disciplines that have overlap with SEL.

personal and social skills in children and youth. Because if it does so, it qualifies as SEL. Each of the fields depicted in Figure 1.1 also has distinctive features from SEL. In brief, Character Education and SEL overlap considerably, but the former approach can be unique in its focus on moral development, moral reasoning, and the motivations behind ethical behavior, which are not usually the focus of SEL. Prevention can also be directed on any aspect of development (e.g., physical or sexual health), and interventions can attempt to change future problems or disorders by targeting either the reduction of risk or the promotion of protective factors that are associated with the etiology of the targeted outcome. Universal, school-based prevention programs are designed to benefit all students and often include the promotion of SECs, so they are often considered SEL programs (Greenberg et al., 2017). Prevention programs can target factors at all levels of the ecology, including the laws or policies intended to reduce risk and create opportunities that decrease the chances of poor outcomes. Because these interventions do not specifically focus on promoting personal or social skills, they are not considered SEL.

Positive youth development, which often concentrates on the adolescent years, may focus on environmental supports and opportunities that encourage youth to use their existing skills or talents instead of directly developing or enhancing new SECs. Positive

psychology can overlap with SEL when it focuses on *both* personal and social skills, but it is distinctive when it focuses only on the former skills. For example, positive psychology often concentrates on changing individuals' cognitions and feelings about how one should view or evaluate what has happened or what is important in one's life, and some of these initiatives are often labeled as *flourishing*, *gratitude*, *well-being*, or *happiness interventions*. In a similar fashion, mental health promotion may overlap with SEL if it focuses on developing both personal and social skills but would not if its goal is on only one of these areas.

In summary, several fields of research and practice have developed over the years that overlap to varying degrees with the aims and goals of SEL. However, we want to stress that the areas we discuss here are not in conflict or antagonistic to each other. In some cases, interventions focus on working directly with young people, while in other cases, the attempt is to work with adults to create the learning conditions or supportive environment for fostering SEL. Although there are exceptions depending on specific programs and circumstances, so that each report should be carefully read and evaluated, the fields in Figure 1.1 typically share several important perspectives and guiding principles in common when they concentrate on promoting both personal and social development. These commonalities include the following:

- Improving young people's personal and social development promotes positive development and adjustment; personal and social skills are malleable and can be changed through various types of interventions.
- Ecological factors present at different levels or contexts (e.g., family, peers, schools, community organizations, and social policies and norms) influence development and adjustment and may be also targeted because such factors can either promote or lessen the impact of interventions.
- Research findings should guide practice and policy.
- Implementation is essential for program success; it is not that evidence-based programs are effective; rather, it is well-im-

plemented, evidence-based programs that are effective.

- A developmental perspective is critical because it suggests what to try to achieve for whom and when; individuals need different skills at different times to master life's challenges, to achieve different goals, and to contribute to their communities.
- Universal approaches should be attempted first; promoting skills is appropriate at all ages and for everyone.
- Cultural and ethnic factors and social contexts matter; programs should be adapted to fit different life circumstances and environments to increase the chances of effectively motivating, engaging, and helping participants.
- Adapting a systemic approach is likely to help us understand the factors that promote or impede the impact of initiatives, and this may contribute to their termination or sustainability.

Many of these commonalities overlap with the principles of SEL presented by Shriver and Weissberg in the Introduction to this volume.

In other words, although the language differs depending on an author's perspective, experience, and traditions, there are now many individuals working in several scientific disciplines who agree that the enhancement of SECs can be beneficial.

The Evolution of SEL

The field of SEL has evolved in several important ways in the past two decades and since the publication of the first edition of the *Handbook* in 2015. We want to emphasize some of these developments. For example, a systemic framework has been proposed and accepted by many in the field as a useful way to guide future policy, research, and practice. There is now international acceptance and promotion of SEL. SEL has also expanded in several ways in terms of who is included in interventions, where interventions may occur, how interventions are delivered, and finally, in what skills should be taught and what outcomes SEL may be able to achieve. The sections that follow are intended to bring readers up-to-date on these major developments and guide them to chapters in this volume that further discuss these issues.

A Systemic Approach to SEL

Over time, the concept of SEL within formal education has evolved significantly, transitioning from traditional classroom-based instruction to a comprehensive and integrated approach spanning various settings. This shift toward a systemic approach emphasizes the alignment and integration of SEL principles, policies, and practices across school, family, and community contexts, departing from isolated interventions. Supported by extensive research (e.g., Berman et al., Chapter 22, this volume; Li et al., 2023; Mahoney et al., 2021; Oberle et al., 2016; Weissberg et al., 2015), this systemic model, typified by schoolwide systemic SEL, permeates classroom practices, academic content, organizational structures, and institutional policies. It is intentionally coordinated with learning experiences in other settings, such as the home, after-school, and community programs; prioritizing active student engagement in cultivating social and emotional skills, fostering positive relationships, equitable learning environments; and amplifying student voice, belonging, agency, and character development.

One way to illustrate a systemic approach to SEL across any setting is depicted in Figure 1.2, which has five interconnected sets of SECs: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making at the core of any intervention. These teachable skills contribute to success in education, work, and life but can be influenced by various interacting ecological factors, depending on the context. For example, in school settings, different factors can affect key settings such as classrooms, schools, homes, and communities. Interactions between students and adults, anchored in SECs and social relationships, shape the learning environment over time, with their impact heightened when language and practices are consistent across settings (Leschitz et al., 2023; Mahoney et al., 2024).

A systemic approach to SEL is pivotal for reinforcing SECs across diverse settings, ensuring cohesive learning experiences, and
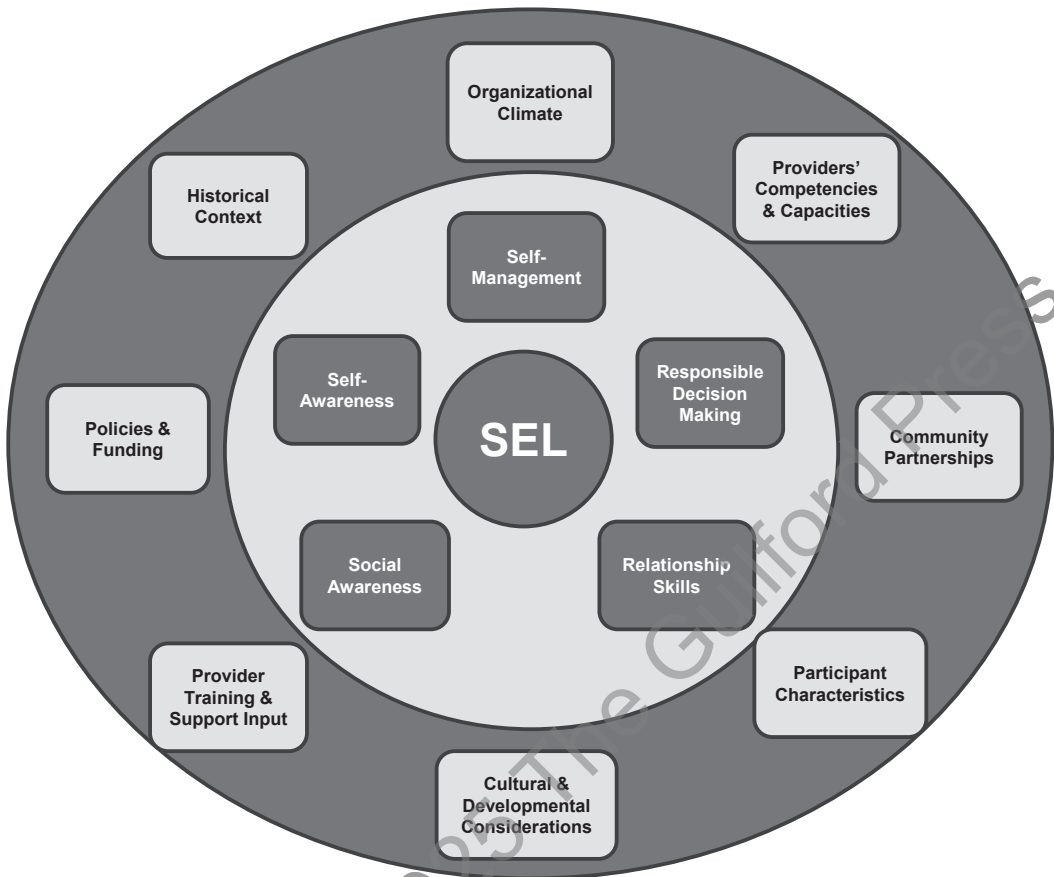
FIGURE 1.2. A systemic view of possible factors affecting SEL initiatives. *Note.* Figure 1.2 can be adapted to fit settings other than traditional school settings by changing the pertinent terms. For example, while the inner focus on promoting SECs in five major domains would still be relevant, references to schools would be dropped in favor of terms related to other settings in which interventions would occur such as community or work staff, managers or supervisors, and organizational climate, culture, practices and policies.

promoting educational equity. This collaborative approach involves stakeholders in developing shared visions and action plans, integrating SEL into various aspects of education over time to address evolving needs from preschool through high school and beyond. It contributes to inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments, empowers marginalized groups, and challenges systemic biases, ultimately serving as a universal component of education. Aligned with a multi-tiered system of support, systemic SEL optimizes resource allocation, potentially reducing the need for intensive services and fostering economic benefits.

SEL Has Achieved Worldwide Acceptance and Support

In its early history, SEL research and practice occurred largely within the United States, but this situation has changed dramatically. Figure 1.3 illustrates that outcome research on SEL-related programs has appeared in at least 153 countries around the world (as of December 10, 2023). Although research in some places has only recently begun, in other countries there is now a substantial and growing SEL research literature. A litany of prestigious international organizations, nonprofit foundations, and scholarly institutions have all agreed on the value of

promoting social and personal development of young people, and have encouraged and supported SEL-related initiatives around the world (e.g., Karanga, 2023; Network of Experts Working on the Social Dimension of Education and Training [NESET], 2023; UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Mahatma Ghandi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development [UNESCO MGIEP], 2022; WHO, 1994; World Bank [see Puerta et al., 2016]).

Furthermore, building on the solid scientific evidence in support of SEL, several countries have developed models for integrating policy, research, and practice. This has been done by establishing nationwide educational or mental health policies that have led to several large-scale dissemination efforts and usually allow flexibility to make adaptations for each community context and served population. The success of these efforts often depends on how far along different countries are in coordinating their efforts, and the financial and professional support that is available for program implementation and evaluation (see Chapters 34 to 39, this volume).

Work at the international level also underscores the importance of customizing programming to fit cultural and social norms and priorities because the same program is unlikely to be successful in every context. In some cases, programs developed in the United States have been effective in other countries, but in many other cases, existing programs have been adapted to fit different contexts and populations, or entirely new programs have been developed and conducted (e.g., Moy & Hazen, 2018; Wigelsworth et al., 2016).

Who Is Served, and Where Interventions Occur

Another evolution in SEL has been expansion in the range of populations that are served and the settings where intervention efforts take place. Universal school-based programs have been and still are a priority to reach all children in preschool through high school. However, as attention has increased regarding the value of SECs, there have been many successful programs that fall under the umbrella of SEL. For example, there are programs that have helped individuals who have some early personal or behavioral problems. We call these "targeted programs," and a growing number of these have been successful for schoolchildren,

FIGURE 1.3. One hundred fifty-three countries in which SEL outcome research has been reported are darkened.

higher education students (including those in various graduate and professional training problems), and adult employees in various organizations (see Durlak & Mahoney, Chapter 3, this volume). Community-based programs have also been effective both as universal and targeted strategies. There has also been increased attention toward improving the personal and social skills of educators. These programs can relieve job stress and improve educators' interpersonal relationships with their colleagues and also aid in more effective implementation of SEL programs for students (in this volume, see Jennings & Alamos, Chapter 10; Hon et al., Chapter 26; Roeser et al., Chapter 27). Furthermore, interventions have been conducted in the workplace to target many of the same skills that are promoted in school settings, such as problem-solving skills, communication skills, and skills relevant to working effectively in groups and with diverse individuals (see Kyllonen et al., Chapter 24, this volume). In other words, the literature has indicated that personal and social skills development is applicable and useful for not only schoolchildren and adolescents but also for college, university, and professional students, and for workers and educators as well. Furthermore, SEL has been an effective strategy when offered universally or as a targeted approach for those with early difficulties.

How Interventions Are Delivered

A final way that SEL has been expanded is through the use of technology, which may include online programs, videos and CDs, virtual reality, or the use of smartphones. There is growing evidence that technological interventions can improve various personal and social skills and offer additional benefits for students, educators, and workers using either a universal or targeted strategy (in this volume, see Durlak & Mahoney, Chapter 3; Rivers et al., Chapter 25).

In summary, in addition to universal school-based programs, SEL may also occur in the community and the workplace, be offered to students of all ages and at all educational levels, target those who have some early-identified difficulties, and can be delivered through various technological means. Each of these developments is an example of

how the SEL field has expanded and broadened its reach over time and suggests where, how, and for whom future SEL research and practice will occur and should be studied. We must stress, however, that there is much more scientific evidence in support of universal school-based interventions for students in early education through high school than there is for these expanded aspects of SEL (see Durlak & Mahoney, Chapter 3, this volume).

What Skills Should Be Promoted and What Outcomes Should Be Assessed?

A succession of reviews has indicated that universal, school-based SEL programs are associated with multiple positive benefits for participants (Durlak et al., 2022). The usual outcome categories that have been assessed include various SECs, such as improvements in attitudes toward self and school, positive social behaviors and academic performance, and reductions in behavior problems and emotional distress (e.g., symptoms of anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms). These outcomes are certainly important, but more recently, authors have emphasized the need to broaden the scope of interventions in terms of targeted skills and possible outcomes that can be achieved through SEL interventions. We discuss two strategies in this section that have been suggested for future SEL programming: transformative SEL and global education.

For example, transformative SEL has been suggested as a potential way to achieve educational equity and excellence for all students (Jagers et al., 2019; also see Cipriano & Strambler, Chapter 5, this volume). Transformative SEL focuses on human rights and social justice and aims to promote skills such as cultural and multicultural competence, positive identity, agency, and skills needed to think critically about the practices and norms of one's community and how they may be improved through social action and citizen participation. Global Citizenship Education is a paradigm that prods educators to develop the competencies learners need for improving their communities in terms of making them more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, and secure (UNESCO, 2015).

These two examples suggest the need to expand traditional ideas about SEL pro-

grams in terms of how students can become skillful members of society and be successful in contributing to the common good. The skills needed for such accomplishments cannot be developed in brief SEL programming but require attention throughout students' educational careers. For example, several basic skills emphasized in many current SEL programs, such as good communication and problem-solving skills, and the ability to work well with others, are likely needed as building blocks before students can develop what may be seen as higher-order or more complicated skills related to good citizenship and social change. Although there is not yet a consensus on exactly which skills might be important to achieve social change, Kioupi and Voulvoulis (2019) provide a useful list of what combination of higher-order cognitive skills and SECs might be useful or necessary. Some of these include the ability to think systemically and strategically, and with a future-orientation; empathy that encompasses understanding and connections across cultural, ethnic, social, and geographic differences; comfort with and acceptance of multicultural differences and the proposed contributions offered by different cultural or ethnic groups; and media literacy.

Research on the impact of the two examples presented here was only beginning when this volume went to press; however, they present challenges in terms of preparing learners to participate in the world of the 21st century. How do we organize a complex hierarchy of skills so they can be most successfully taught to all students? How can we measure these skills using fair, culturally sensitive assessment methods? What educational practices are most conducive to developing different skills? Perhaps project-based learning, service learning, and community internships and mentorships can contribute in this regard. How should we measure the process of social change that is complicated and usually does not occur quickly? How do we prepare educators to incorporate and reach these ambitious goals through effective pedagogical practices?

Progress toward the ambitious or aspirational goals discussed here (e.g., developing the necessary motivation and competence to make needed changes in society) is applicable for all learners but may be particularly important for students who have been historically marginalized or excluded due to racial, social, or economic reasons. These students might be more engaged and motivated to participate and contribute when learning opportunities and practices speak to their real-life experiences and their input is solicited about how to change the current state of affairs.

We mention transformative SEL and global education as innovative ideas that are attempting to broaden the scope of what competencies can be developed through SEL programming and enhance SEL-related efforts to help learners become more active and participatory members of the local and global community. Essentially, these ideas are a challenge to test the potential of SEL. We expect SEL activities in the next decade to reflect creative responses to these challenges.

Major Themes in This Handbook

Table 1.1 lists eight major themes addressed in various (and often multiple) chapters of this handbook and important questions that need to be addressed for progress to be made in SEL. Several of these have already been discussed, but we want to comment on a few of the others.

Equity

Equity has become an important consideration for all types of physical, mental, social, and educational services, particularly for groups that historically have not been well served by various systems of care. Although different conceptions of equity have been advanced, two important considerations are inclusion and benefit; that is, who is being served and who is benefiting from their participation? Current data are initially reassuring with respect to equity in SEL initiatives both in terms of inclusion and benefit. Universal, school-based programs have been effective in many countries for many diverse populations, and when participant characteristics are examined, the data indicate that students from different racial and ethnic groups, those from lower socioeconomic groups, and those with special learning and developmental needs have benefited from

TABLE 1.1. Major Themes Occurring throughout This Handbook

Themes	Questions addressed
Language and communication	How should SEL be defined and communicated for different audiences to clarify what it is, and what it is not?
Systemic SEL	How might different individual and ecological factors/levels be important for program training, implementation, and impacts?
Advancing equity	How are equity, inclusion, and opportunity—including cultural and social appropriateness—important to, and integrated in, SEL theory, practice, and impacts?
Adult SEL	How are parents, educators, and other adults working with children supported to develop and reinforce SEL across settings and over time?
Practice and policy	How can we build, disseminate, implement, and sustain effective practices and policies in organizations and systems?
Assessment	What are the advancements and challenges to developing and disseminating practical and psychometrically sound assessments of student and adult SECs that are contextually, culturally, and developmentally appropriate?
Rigorous research	How has the research basis for SEL advanced, and what needs to improve to better ground SEL practice in rigorous empirical science?
Field building	What recommendations can be offered to guide the field of SEL in the coming years?

SEL programs (see Durlak et al., 2022; Durlak & Mahoney, Chapter 3, this volume). Unfortunately, too few studies have examined these issues. Therefore, more research is needed to assess how well SEL programs serve the needs of all participants and how much more effective they might become if changes were made to meet the needs and circumstances of different participants. The chapters in Part III of this volume discuss various complexities related to equity for all SEL participants.

Assessment

Many different assessment methods and measures have been used to evaluate SECs. Recent advancements, such as the Measuring SEL website and tools from CASEL (2022), have facilitated educators' selection of practical, reliable measures to assess SECs. Additionally, resources provided by RAND (2022) and Jones and colleagues (2016) offer valuable assessment tools. As SEL integration expands globally, there is a growing recognition of the need for both developmentally appropriate and culturally valid measures (in this volume, see Lovelace et al., Chapter 16; Crowder et al., Chapter 30), incorporating youth voices from the outset. However, addressing cultural bias in assessments remains a challenge on a large scale. Moreover, existing assessments of SECs have been designed for universal administration and interpretation. The field will need to determine how these measures align (or do not align) within the context of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) that follows differentiated instruction and frequent monitoring of student progress (Shapiro et al., 2024). We also need much more work on SEC assessments for adults and their connection to student SEL (see Jennings & Alamos, Chapter 10, this volume). Ultimately, SEL assessments must prioritize practicality (see McKown & Kharitonova, Chapter 4, this volume), ensuring that they are feasible, understandable, and actionable for users, while also demonstrating equitable improvements in students' SECs.

Field Building

As the field of SEL has grown over time, challenges encountered have been manifested in various forms, including differing perspec-

tives regarding what SEL is, its role in education, and its appropriateness for all. There have been debates over curriculum content, funding allocation, and policy implementation, sometimes resulting in fragmented efforts and polarized viewpoints. To overcome these challenges, it is imperative for the SEL community to apply its SEC to listen to others' perspectives, needs, and concerns, in order to overcome resistance and foster more acceptance and participation. By emphasizing common ground such as students' school success, family and community engagement, workforce readiness, and evidence-based practices, while also embracing diverse perspectives, experiences, and voices, the field can cultivate a more inclusive and resilient approach that recognizes the multifaceted needs of learners and communities. This collective effort will enable practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders to navigate complex sociopolitical landscapes and advocate for SEL tailored to local needs. In doing so, the field can continue to build and advance its mission of supporting the well-being and success of all individuals.

Overview of the *Handbook* Contents

Collaboration has been an important principle in the birth, development, and expansion of SEL, and this volume continues this theme. Many chapters stress that collaborative work among various stakeholders is necessary to construct and implement programs that are well suited for their intended populations, and how collaboration is necessary to effect systemic change in educational and mental health institutions. The planning and execution of this volume reflected the theme of collaboration. For example, before working with our publisher, we shared our initial outline for this Handbook with leading figures in the field and tried to incorporate their useful suggestions to strengthen its overall contents. We discussed who is doing relevant work and strived for more diversity of perspectives on authorship teams. We also asked several authors who had not previously worked together to collaborate on the writing of several chapters.

This second edition of the *Handbook* has a new structure. We decided to organize chapters into six major parts. Each one is

intended to provide authoritative, in-depth coverage of major issues and research findings. We solicited the participation of leaders in the field to serve as section editors to help us review chapters and to include commentary in Parts II through VI. We also asked authors to highlight major issues that had been discussed by offering key takeaway messages at the end of each chapter.

In the front matter, the foreword by Maurice Elias and the introduction by Tim Shriver set the stage for what is to come. Part I covers several foundational issues of SEL. This chapter provides a broad overview of the current status of SEL and how it has expanded since the *Handbook* was first published in 2015. Chapter 2 describes important issues and developments in the history and early development of SEL. Part I also contains successive chapters covering research findings, assessment, equity, SEL's economic value to individuals and society, federal and state policies, and field building.

Celene E. Domitrovich and Susanne A. Denham present an introduction and overview of Part II, which discusses the process of SEL at different developmental periods. Separate chapters are devoted to SEL in preschool, the elementary years, and adolescence. There is also a chapter on SEL efforts with young adults in higher-education settings and two chapters that focus on the important caregivers of children and youth. The first of these chapters argues that school–family–community partnerships are essential for supporting SEL. The second presents a framework of SECs for educators and explains how these skills and behaviors impact student SEL.

Section editors Christina Cipriano and Michael J. Strambler introduce Part III, which focuses on the general issue of equity. Chapters in this section cover discipline practices, culturally sensitive assessment practices, and supportive school climate. These chapters illustrate how different strategies can be used to create conditions that increase the likelihood that all children can maximize their potential. The next section, Part IV, introduced by section editors Laura S. Hamilton and Harrison J. Kell, is devoted to expanding contexts and applications of SEL. The chapters in this large section concentrate on topics such as integrating SEL into academic instruction, civic learning and

community engagement, MTSS and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) interventions, the importance of SEL with respect to trauma and mental health, school district-level programming, SEL programs in after-school and other community settings, the importance of SEL in the workplace, and the application of technology to SEL interventions.

Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl, Summer S. Braun, and Julia Mahfouz introduce Part V, which is devoted to discussion of strategies that encourage widespread effective practice. These chapters focus on topics such as SEL for preservice and inservice teachers and school leaders, using assessments for monitoring and continuous program improvement, the challenges involved in identifying the active components of SEL programs, integrating SEL learning standards into educational curricula, the importance of readiness when schools and other organizations are deciding about adopting SEL programs, and general issues related to the effective implementation and scaling-up of successful interventions.

Finally, Carmel Cefai introduces Part VI. In contrast to the single chapter on international SEL programs in the first edition of the *Handbook*, we wanted to recognize and emphasize international developments in this edition. This final section includes six chapters, in which we asked authors from different countries to combine their efforts as each chapter describes research, practice, and policy in multiple representative countries around the globe. For example, chapters describe work done in several countries in Europe, the continent of Australia, Latin and South America, and India and Kenya. There are also two additional chapters, one providing an overview of SEL on the world stage and the other focusing on the value of SEL programming conducted in countries facing conflict and crisis because of factors such as wars, civil unrest, or extensive immigration or emigration. Finally, we invited the first cohort of CASEL Weissberg Scholars to prepare an Afterword and provide their perspectives on the current status and some future directions for the field.

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