



# Preparing Teachers to Support Social and Emotional Learning

*A Case Study of San Jose State University  
and Lakewood Elementary School*

Hanna Melnick and Lorea Martinez

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## Executive Summary

The evidence is clear: Social and emotional skills, habits, and mindsets can set students up for academic and life success. Given that decades of research show that a focus on social and emotional learning (SEL) can lead to positive outcomes, from increased test scores and graduation rates to improved prosocial skills that support student success in school and beyond, SEL is now considered part of a whole-child education. It is less clear what schools and teachers can do to develop these abilities.

This case study seeks to inform policymakers, practitioners, and teacher educators about the components of a strong, SEL-focused teacher preparation and development program by exploring two rich examples. San Jose State University (SJSU)'s elementary teacher education program provides an example of how new teachers can be prepared to address students' social and emotional needs in their preservice education. Lakewood Elementary School in Sunnyvale, CA, where many SJSU graduates are working to integrate SEL in their daily work with students, provides an example of in-service teacher development. The report concludes with implications for policy and practice.

### SJSU: Preparing Educators to Teach the Whole Child

SJSU is a publicly funded university in California. Its elementary teacher education program, which graduates 125 students annually, has had an explicit focus on SEL since 2009, when a faculty member founded the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child. The elementary education department has been working with the Center to integrate a focus on what the Center calls the “social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning” throughout its program, from courses on foundational theory and academic curriculum to fieldwork. This case study finds that SJSU supports teacher candidates' understanding in a variety of ways.

**Courses provide teacher candidates with ongoing opportunities to reflect on their own social and emotional competencies and their teaching philosophy.** Faculty stress the importance of directly teaching social and emotional competencies to students, but they try to first encourage teacher candidates to deepen their own social and emotional development. In the Classroom Management course, for example, two sessions are devoted to self-monitoring: The first is for candidates to monitor themselves and the second is to teach this skill to students. Faculty also incorporate cooperative learning and mindfulness activities into their courses—activities that are useful for candidates themselves but also for the classes they lead. Candidates are also encouraged to develop a teaching philosophy that is consistent with their teaching practices. One common assignment is to create a letter to a substitute teacher that describes their teaching philosophy and how it manifests in classroom routines.

**The curriculum focuses on developing a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment.** SJSU faculty make it clear that the development of a positive, inclusive learning environment is foundational for social and emotional development, and they explicitly model strategies for developing this environment in the university classroom. They also provide strategies for building trusting relationships, ranging from community-building classroom activities to finding time each day to connect with difficult-to-reach students.

**Academic curriculum courses address social and emotional development after it is explicitly introduced in foundational courses.** In the course on mathematics curriculum, for example, the professor frames mastery of basic math facts as an opportunity for students to self-assess and monitor their own progress. Candidates practice having students chart their own progress over time, identify strategies that help them learn, and “chunk” large tasks into manageable pieces. In the course on literacy curriculum, candidates explore using leveled reading lessons to develop their students’ growth mindset and their ability to work through the difficult challenges on their own.

**Teacher candidates practice, reflect on, and identify the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning in their student teaching.** The administration tries to provide strong mentor teachers for teacher candidates, and in some instances these mentor teachers participate in professional development on SEL led by the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child. University supervisors, many of whom received SEL training alongside SJSU faculty, help build a bridge between teacher candidates’ coursework and the classroom.

Integrating SEL into SJSU’s preservice program has been possible in part thanks to the time that staff have devoted to developing a common language and commitment across the curriculum. The support of an internal change agent, the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child, has helped as well.

## **Lakewood Elementary: Integrating Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning**

Lakewood Elementary School’s motto is “technology and social smarts for the 21st century.” Located in the Sunnyvale School District in the heart of Silicon Valley, Lakewood serves a diverse student population: 61% are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 45% are English language learners.

Sunnyvale School District has long had an interest in SEL, in part because it has hosted many of SJSU’s teacher candidates in their student teaching and hired many graduates. It has also developed a partnership with the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child, which conducts districtwide trainings for cooperating teachers—the teachers who mentor student teachers—on the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning. In 2016, Lakewood Elementary began schoolwide professional development on SEL, led by the Center, to build on staff interest in the topic. In learning about Lakewood’s ongoing work to embed a focus on SEL schoolwide, we identify four key aspects of its work that have contributed to an authentic and sustainable SEL initiative.

**SEL is intentionally implemented through a variety of instructional approaches.** Teachers at Lakewood explicitly teach social and emotional competencies. Lakewood does not have a mandatory SEL curriculum, but instead allows each grade level to choose among a variety of SEL curricular resources, such as a teacher-created curriculum or a prepackaged curriculum called Second Step. Most teachers spend significant time on explicit instruction in the first 6 weeks of school. They also infuse SEL practices in their academic teaching, while providing a safe and supportive learning environment for students.

**Teachers and administrators are co-leaders in developing and growing the school’s SEL program and practices.** Lakewood’s principal brought in teacher training and assessment tools, including the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment, to support Lakewood’s schoolwide SEL focus and implementation. She is a hands-on principal who has actively created structured opportunities

for teachers to lead the implementation of SEL on campus. Teacher Learning Days, for example, provide a schoolwide opportunity for all teachers to share strategies, resources, and materials. Teacher leaders are also encouraged to mentor and support one another, for example by conducting behavioral observations in each other's classrooms.

**Educators' preparation and the development of their own social and emotional skills support SEL implementation.** Lakewood's schoolwide professional development, led by the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child, is aligned with the school's focus on SEL, providing teachers ongoing opportunities during the year to learn promising practices for themselves and their students. One training, for example, focused on developing students' growth mindset, the belief that one can improve with hard work over time. Cooperating teachers working with the Center have become teacher leaders as they deepen their practice through in-depth training on similar topics.

**The school's structures and resources support the whole child.** Lakewood's focus on SEL is enhanced by the adoption of a positive behavior system, a preventive behavior management system that focuses on identifying, acknowledging, and encouraging desired positive student behaviors. Lakewood has also built community partnerships with social and health service agencies that provide student services such as counseling.

Although the school's integration of SEL is still a work in progress, teachers continue to grow their SEL practices through collaboration and the use of SEL data to make instructional decisions, with the goal of nurturing students' social, emotional, and academic learning.

## Implications for Preservice Teacher Education Programs

SJSU's preservice program provides many rich lessons. These include insights into how teacher preparation programs can:

- **Develop teachers' social and emotional competence.** Doing so has important consequences for their students' social and emotional development, as well as for the likelihood of teacher retention in their classrooms.
- **Help teacher candidates set the stage for SEL by teaching them to develop a safe, inclusive, and supportive classroom environment.** The science of learning and development is clear that students thrive socially, emotionally, and academically in a safe and supportive learning environment.
- **Integrate the teaching of SEL into the teaching of academic subjects.** Social and emotional competencies can be woven into the teaching of core academic content and curriculum, moving beyond the common misconception that SEL is something that is just taught in stand-alone lessons.
- **Develop strong university–district partnerships to improve a focus on the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning throughout the teacher preparation pipeline.** Student teaching is where teacher candidates must apply the multiple theories and strategies they have learned in their coursework. For these experiences to be successful, teacher candidates should be able to see their cooperating teacher model good teaching that is attentive to SEL.

- **Provide time for faculty for training and collaboration to integrate practices that support SEL effectively in their coursework.** Faculty need time to participate in trainings, read, inspect their own syllabi and assignments, and collaborate with each other. Integrating SEL into a preservice program requires time for the whole staff to develop a common language and commitment across the curriculum.

## Implications for Schools

Lakewood offers several lessons about how a school can support SEL.

- **Integrate SEL into the fabric of the school.** All adults, from leadership to support staff, need to understand the importance of SEL and know how to support it. SEL is seen not as something that is done through discrete lessons, but rather as something that is used as a lens to consider students' development.
- **Start with the social and emotional learning of the adults.** When teachers and principals are aware of their own emotions and how these emotions impact the classroom and school environment, they are more likely to support students in understanding their own emotions.
- **Create explicit opportunities to generate buy-in and engage teachers in making decisions about SEL implementation.** Educators are a key component of any SEL initiative; without their buy-in and commitment, resources allocated for SEL implementation could go to waste. By creating opportunities for teachers to learn about SEL through trainings, observing colleagues at their school or district, or attending conferences, educators can be active participants in making decisions about how SEL is implemented at their school.
- **Create professional development on SEL that is explicit, sustained, and job-embedded.** Teachers, counselors, coaches, and other professionals working in schools benefit from training on how to teach social and emotional competencies and how to infuse SEL in teaching practices. As with all good professional development, follow-up and coaching are important components of educator learning, which ideally is differentiated based on the educator's experience and prior exposure to SEL and the needs of the student population being served.
- **Provide ongoing support to educators using SEL assessments for instructional purposes.** SEL assessments can provide meaningful data about students' social and emotional skills, which teachers can use to inform classroom instruction. Educators need sufficient time and training to understand the measurement tool and how it relates to the school's SEL implementation framework before being asked to use and respond to data.

## Implications for Policy

This case study provides insight for policymakers into what collaboration among teacher preparation programs, districts, and schools can do to prepare educators to support students' social and emotional development across the teacher pipeline. For example:



1. **States can include the knowledge and skills teachers need to support students' SEL in state teaching standards.** Including a strong focus on SEL in teacher licensing and accreditation standards could help bring coherence to how SEL is included in the scope and sequence of preservice coursework and create the expectation that all teachers need to meet these standards.
2. **States or institutions of higher education can adopt performance assessments that require teacher candidates to demonstrate SEL-focused skills and knowledge as a condition of teacher licensure.** For example, California's new Teaching Performance Expectations, along with its video-based performance assessment, include specific standards regarding SEL, culturally responsive teaching, and the ability to provide a socially and emotionally safe learning environment that must be met for licensure. States could add to or supplement their current assessments of teacher candidates to ensure that candidates demonstrate the skills needed to support students' SEL.
3. **Policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels can invest in university–district partnerships that strengthen teacher candidates' field experiences and enhance districts' ability to support students' SEL.** Student teaching experiences are at the heart of preservice programs, so it is critical that teacher candidates have strong mentor teachers who effectively address the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning. States and districts, as well as institutions of higher education, can incentivize these partnerships through funding and technical assistance.
4. **Federal, state, and local efforts can support school and district leaders' learning about SEL and administrators' role in supporting teachers and students.** Principal and district leadership is essential to sustaining a focus on SEL, and high-quality principal development requires financial investment. States can use federal funds to offset the expense of principal preparation and training. States may want to consider taking advantage of targeted funds, such as those provided in Title II of the Every Student Succeeds Act, to make strategic investments in their school leader workforce.
5. **Policymakers can also provide schools with resources and technical assistance as they seek to advance SEL.** Educators need to be trained to analyze schools' needs and implement high-quality programs, professional development, and school organizational changes that support students' development. Lakewood Elementary and Sunnyvale School District are fortunate to have professional development support from multiple sources, but not all schools and districts know where to turn. Federal- or state-level support may include technical assistance, the facilitation of peer learning networks, and funding to bolster schools' efforts in supporting students' SEL.
6. **States and districts can provide well-validated tools to measure SEL, school climate, and related school supports.** Well-designed and well-implemented measurement tools can help educators make strategic decisions about investments in student services and programs, ranging from measures of school climate and students' social and emotional competencies to diagnostic measures such as protocols for observing and reflecting on educator practices and school structures. Staff surveys can strengthen educators' voice in their professional development and allow them to weigh in on which supports they need most.

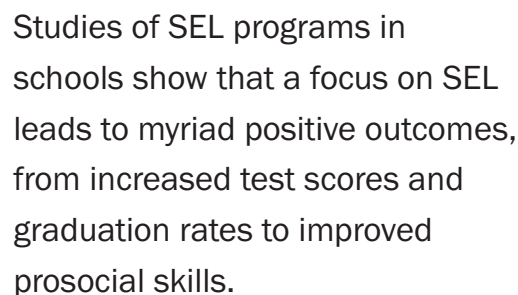
## Introduction

Parents, teachers, researchers, and policymakers have a growing interest in supporting students' social, emotional, *and* academic development in the classroom. After decades of policies with a narrow focus on mathematics and reading test scores, there is increasing consensus that students must build the social and emotional skills, mindsets, and habits that set them up for academic and life success—and that schools have an important role to play in their development.<sup>1</sup>

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a broad and multifaceted concept often defined as “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.”<sup>2</sup> Studies of SEL programs in schools show that a focus on SEL leads to myriad positive outcomes, from increased test scores and graduation rates to improved prosocial skills.<sup>3</sup> Researchers are now starting to shed light on why this might be true: Comprehensive reviews of the science of learning and development show that one of the four essential components students need to thrive is support for the intentional development of social, emotional, and cognitive skills, mindsets, and habits. (The other three components are strong relationships, well-designed curriculum, and comprehensive school supports.)<sup>4</sup>

Teachers and leaders have begun to embrace these principles, with over 90% showing strong support for schools having an increased focus on SEL.<sup>5</sup> Yet they also want greater guidance on how SEL can be explicitly taught and integrated into schools' daily work. Similarly, institutions of higher education have begun to make SEL a greater priority but are still struggling to find ways to integrate it into their teacher preparation programs.<sup>6</sup>

This two-part case study addresses these issues. The first part describes how one preservice program has sought to prepare teachers for the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning *before* they get to the classroom, focusing on San Jose State University (SJSU)'s elementary teacher preparation program. The second part provides a glimpse into in-service professional development for SEL in Lakewood Elementary School in Sunnyvale, CA. Sunnyvale School District employs many staff trained at SJSU and works with the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child (CRTWC), an organization focused on the integration of social and emotional learning in schools that works with university professors, university supervisors, and the cooperating teachers who mentor teacher candidates. This case study is intended to show how preservice and in-service teacher training can impact teaching practices and the implementation of SEL in schools. (See Appendix A for a discussion of the methodology.)



Studies of SEL programs in schools show that a focus on SEL leads to myriad positive outcomes, from increased test scores and graduation rates to improved prosocial skills.

This case study offers policymakers, practitioners, and teacher educators information about the components of strong teacher preparation that is focused on SEL from the university to the classroom. It also provides a picture of what it looks like when SEL is integrated into the school day. This study is part of a larger suite of studies that examine how schools can help develop the whole child.

### **The Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child**

CRTWC was founded in 2009 at SJSU in the teacher education department by Dr. Nancy Markowitz “to address the need to integrate social-emotional learning skills, dispositions, and habits of mind with culturally responsive teaching into preservice teacher education.” From 2009 to 2016, CRTWC worked with faculty, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers to integrate SEL into SJSU’s teacher preparation program. Although still connected to SJSU, CRTWC is now an independent organization that works with faculty from other teacher preparation programs, including through its [Teacher Educator Institute](#). CRTWC’s office is located in Sunnyvale School District at Lakewood Elementary School, where staff additionally run professional development for cooperating teachers.

The Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child. (n.d.). Who we are. <http://crtwc.org/strategic-plan-2/mission-and-vision/>.

### **Elementary School Students’ Social and Emotional Development**

This case study focuses on preparing educators to teach elementary school students, although many of the lessons learned apply to teaching younger and older students as well. When students are in elementary school, they are in a stage of development sometimes referred to as middle childhood. From ages 6 to 10, children are developing the ability to engage in abstract thought, establishing foundational aspects of their sense of self, and growing in their relationships with others. As students move further along this developmental stage, they are increasingly able to engage in metacognition—thinking about their thinking—that will allow them to be reflective, adaptable young adults. The transition to elementary school also introduces the reality that different social situations demand different norms. At this stage, students need support in learning how to manage these transitions.

Source: Author’s summary of content from Nagaoka, J., Farrington, C. A., Ehrlich, S. B., & Heath, R. D. (2015). *Foundations for young adult success: A development framework*. Chicago, IL: Wallace Foundation. <https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2018-10/Foundations%20for%20Young%20Adult-Jun2015-Consortium.pdf>.

# San Jose State University: Preparing Educators to Teach the Whole Child

## A Glimpse Inside SJSU

When Professor Lara Kassab arrives at her classroom door a little before 4:00 p.m., more than 20 teacher candidates are laughing and talking in the hallway. Kassab is teaching Critical Perspectives on Schooling, also known as Classroom Management, a course in the middle of a three-semester teacher preparation program at San Jose State University.

Teacher candidates filter into the classroom and move the chairs from rows into a large circle. On the board, Kassab displays the evening’s agenda: the Morning Meeting; identifying and describing teacher candidates’ philosophies of education, learning, and teaching; and work time to write a letter to a substitute teacher that reflects this philosophy.

Before starting the class, Kassab acknowledges that the candidates may be experiencing stress because of the upcoming California Teaching Performance Assessment, which is required by the state for teacher licensure. “I’m trying to lower our affective filters in here,” she explains. She sends a stack of papers around the room with positive statements, or “affirmations,” written on them, such as “I can do whatever I focus my mind on” and “I feel confident and secure.” She tells candidates to choose one to focus on for the day. They are silent as they read and think.<sup>7</sup>

After a few minutes, a couple of the teacher candidates share the affirmation they chose to focus on and why. Kassab then asks a typical follow-up question: “When might you do this with students, and how can it be modified for different grade levels?” A teacher candidate doing her student teaching says her class is struggling with confidence in writing—she might pick a single affirmation to focus on for writer’s workshop. Another teacher candidate teaching 3rd grade says she would simply have the affirmations written in simpler language but might otherwise use as is. “Who would use pictures, and for whom?” Kassab asks. The class discusses the benefits of picture cues for English language learners, as well as kindergarteners.

Kassab then introduces the greeting for the day.

We’re going to be saying an adjective and our names, that are alliterative. Would you like 30 seconds to think? Think first, then we’ll practice with a neighbor, and then we’ll do it whole class. If you can’t think of one, do a phone a friend and ask for help.

This greeting models language she would use to give instructions to an elementary school classroom. The class quickly goes around and greets each other, one teacher candidate saying, “Hi, I’m Zealous Zara,” and classmates responding, “Hi, Zealous Zara!”

“Excellent! What did this exercise do for us?” Kassab prompts. Teacher candidates note that it made them laugh and smile. Kassab further notes, “This is an activity you might want to do early in the year because it helps us learn our students’ names. The process of alliteration works in your mind to help you remember. You may not remember ‘Zara’ but you will remember ‘Zealous.’” Another teacher candidate adds that it is just fun and can help students learn about each other.

Kassab starts each class period with a “Morning Meeting,” a community-building meeting at the start of class in which teacher candidates greet one another, participate in a brief activity, and read a message from the teacher.<sup>8</sup> The purpose is to both set a positive atmosphere for her own teacher candidates and model how they might develop a welcoming learning environment in their own classrooms. “One of the things that I appreciated the most,” says a teacher candidate of her coursework, “is just being able to practice these kinds of skills. I’ve seen what kind of difference it makes as a student.”

“One of the things that I appreciated the most is just being able to practice these kinds of skills. I’ve seen what kind of difference it makes as a student.”

## San Jose State University’s Teacher Education Program

### University and department context

SJSU is one of California’s publicly funded universities. Originally founded in 1857 as a teacher preparation program, the university now serves more than 30,000 students in nearly 150 degree programs.

The SJSU Department of Elementary Education offers a 1-year, 3-semester combined Multiple Subject Credential and Master of Arts in Education program. (See Table 1.) This case study focuses on the Department of Elementary Education, which prepares teacher candidates for a Multiple Subject Credential (MSC) for grades k–8 and graduated 125 teacher candidates in 2016–17.<sup>9</sup> The cohort in education that year was made up of students from a range of racial and ethnic backgrounds: 36% non-Hispanic White, 29% Hispanic, 19% Asian, 2% Black, and 13% who reported as “other.” The Department of Elementary Education employs about 30 faculty members at a given time, one third of whom are on the tenure track.

In the first of their three semesters, teacher candidates typically enroll in theoretical courses that develop their understanding of how children learn. By their second semester, they take more coursework on curriculum and instruction, and they spend about half of the week in a student teaching placement. In the final semester, teacher candidates are student teaching full time and completing their master’s thesis. Courses typically enroll about 25 teacher candidates, while seminars with university supervisors who provide coaching in the field are much smaller, with two to 12 teacher candidates per group.

**Table 1**  
**Combined Multiple Subject Credential/M.A. at SJSU**

| Semester | Required Courses  | Key SEL Theme  |
|----------|---|--|
| 1        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychology Foundations</li> <li>• Educational Sociology/Multicultural Studies</li> <li>• Second Language Acquisition</li> <li>• Health and Special Education</li> <li>• Curriculum: Mathematics</li> </ul> | Developing teacher candidates' understanding of child development, motivation, and learning theory |
| 2        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom Management</li> <li>• Curriculum: Reading/Language Arts</li> <li>• Curriculum: Science</li> <li>• Student Teaching Phase I</li> <li>• Master's Research</li> </ul>                               | Developing a supportive learning environment and integrating SEL into academic curriculum          |
| 3        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum: Social Studies</li> <li>• Student Teaching Phase II</li> <li>• Master's Project</li> </ul>   | Applying and reflecting on SEDTL in the classroom  |

**Key:** Foundational theory course; Curriculum course; Student teaching; Master's thesis.

Note: This table describes the required courses for a master's degree in curriculum and instruction in the elementary teacher education program. Most courses, but not all, include a focus on social and emotional learning. Course names are ones used colloquially by faculty or teacher candidates in interviews.

Source: San Jose State University. (2017). Teacher Education Department (TED)—Multiple Subject Credential/MA Program. <http://www.sjsu.edu/elementaryed/MSCP%20Advisement%20Guide%2010.18.2017-3.pdf> (accessed 06/12/18).

### SJSU's focus on the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning

Teacher preparation programs, such as the one at SJSU, provide a logical place to begin educating teachers on the role of emotions and social relationships in learning, appropriate expectations for children and adolescents' social and emotional development, and ways teachers can support students' growth in this area. Yet according to a report commissioned by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), "most educators ... have not been prepared to apply knowledge of child and adolescent development and learning and are thus not sufficiently able to provide developmentally oriented instruction."<sup>10</sup> Preservice education can be improved, the report suggests, by providing more formal opportunities to learn about children's social and emotional development in preservice coursework and by making sure that teacher candidates' classroom experiences—from observations to student teaching—are organized so that teacher candidates can reflect on and apply this approach in practice. Such an integrated approach requires the coordination of many actors. (See Table 2.)

**Table 2**  
**Who Are the Key Players in Teacher Education Programs?**

| Role                   | Description  |
|------------------------|--|
| Teacher candidates     | Graduate students enrolled in a teacher education program                                  |
| Faculty                | Teacher educators at the university level  |
| University supervisors | Part-time faculty members who run seminars and coach teacher candidates in the field       |
| Cooperating teachers   | Mentor teachers in school districts with whom teacher candidates do their student teaching |
| Students               | Children and youth attending k–12 schools  |

A survey conducted by CRTWC of leaders in California teacher education programs found that, while SEL is indeed a priority for teacher education programs, respondents wanted a greater understanding of SEL and how to teach it to their teacher candidates.<sup>11</sup> For example, almost one third of survey respondents said that education faculty lack awareness or knowledge of SEL, and most programs integrate the teaching of SEL in only a limited number of courses. Student teaching was noted as a critical component of teacher candidates’ learning of SEL, yet many respondents expressed that school districts did not use SEL-informed approaches to classroom management.

The elementary teacher education program at San Jose State University provides an example of how to prepare educators for teaching with an SEL lens from which other institutions of higher education can learn. The focus on SEL started 10 years ago when Professor Emerita Nancy Markowitz founded CRTWC as a center within the university focused on integrating SEL into her department’s coursework. Wendy Thowdis joined Dr. Markowitz in 2012 as Assistant Director. Based on CRTWC’s initiative, SJSU has been developing an explicit focus on SEL throughout its curriculum, faculty training, and mission and vision. A glimpse into the impact it has had on teachers through its partnership with one district, Sunnyvale School District, is described in the second part of this report.

### What is SEDTL?

Scholars at CRTWC coined the term “social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning” (SEDTL) to emphasize that the social and emotional development of educators and their students impact both teaching and learning. They explain that looking at both teaching and learning acknowledges the need to “explicitly attend to both the *teachers’* and the *students’* social-emotional skills in order to explain what must be addressed in preservice teacher education.”<sup>12</sup>

CRTWC—in consultation with SJSU faculty, teacher leaders in Sunnyvale School District, and culturally responsive teaching expert Zaretta Hammond—has developed a schema for integrating SEDTL and culturally responsive teaching that includes seven anchor competencies (see Figure 1). This schema provides an overview of a philosophy that now supports the work of many SJSU faculty members.

SJSU and CRTWC’s philosophy is based on the belief that education ought to address the whole person and that development is shaped not just by schools but by one’s sociopolitical, cultural, community, and individual context. Teachers are an important part of this social context: How teachers relate to their students, and the model they set for classroom interactions, affects students’ receptivity to learning and their own social-emotional development. Says SJSU Professor Grinell Smith,

A lot of the things that we ought to take a teaching stance about have nothing to do with the curriculum as defined by California. It’s what’s happening in the students’ lives. It’s their social and cultural well-being and their attachment to the community and to each other.

The recognition that multiple contexts shape whole-child development is reflected in the Multiple Subject Credential Program’s vision statement, which states:

Our vision is to prepare ethical and social justice oriented teachers who create relevant, rigorous, transformative educational experiences, attuned to students’ academic, cultural, linguistic, social, and emotional needs.<sup>13</sup>

CRTWC developed the concept of using a social and emotional learning “lens” in teaching, and SJSU faculty adopted this concept in working with their teacher candidates. This is in contrast to providing a program or set of lessons that are taught in addition to academics. The term SEDTL focuses on the dimensions of teaching and learning because it is “explicitly focused on bringing the social-emotional perspective into the on-going school curriculum rather than focusing on SEL programs that can be added.”<sup>14</sup>

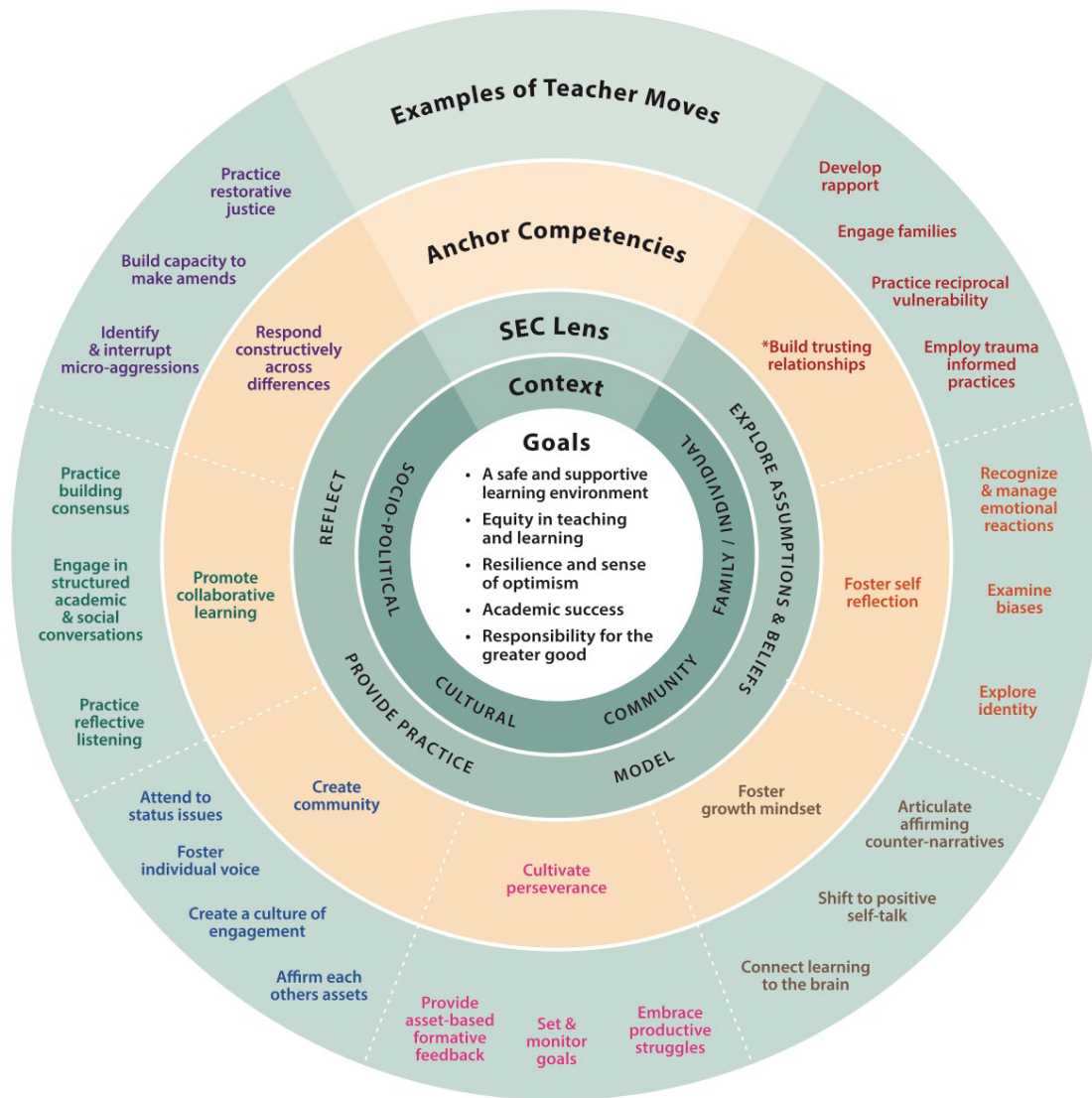
An important aspect of CRTWC’s framework is that teaching should be culturally responsive, which is defined as “an educator’s ability to recognize students’ cultural displays of learning and meaning making and respond positively and constructively with ‘teacher moves’ that use cultural knowledge as a scaffold.”<sup>15</sup> Scholars at CRTWC state that

Equity and cultural competence, as demonstrated by using strategies that build collectivism in the classroom, are essential to the work of effective teachers.... In order to successfully address [the SEDTL], educators must attend to students’ culture and the socio-political context through culturally relevant teaching practices.<sup>16</sup>

To be culturally responsive, teachers must be aware of their own personal biases and the beliefs and biases held by their students. Exploring assumptions and reflection are thus core pieces of developing a lens for teaching and learning. Culturally responsive teaching is built into each of the anchor competencies, from building relationships to getting to know students as individuals to responding to conflict across differences.



**Figure 1**  
**SEL/CRT Anchor Competencies Schema**



\* Building trusting relationships is essential to the development of all anchor competencies.

Source: Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child. (2019). SEL/CRT Anchor Competencies Schema. Reprinted with permission.

**How SJSU came to focus on SEDTL**

SJSU’s intensive focus on SEL began with a few professors. Markowitz, whose research centered on learning environments in diverse, multicultural, urban k–8 classrooms; university/school collaboration; and teacher preparation, sparked the conversation in 2008. “I was teaching a course in creating effective learning environments,” she recounts in an interview. “There was always something around SEL in it.” As she got further and further into her exploration of SEL, her department chair suggested that she take a sabbatical to continue the research.

Markowitz's colleagues were excited and supportive of her work, and six of the department's 14 faculty members eventually formed a professional learning community with initial funding from the SJSU College of Education to support release time. As the project developed, additional funding came from the Morgan Family Foundation and the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation. Markowitz engaged consultants from a local nonprofit organization, Acknowledge Alliance, to learn more about SEL and its place in academic learning. These faculty began examining where SEL was integrated in coursework throughout their preservice program, from psychology foundations to academic curriculum courses. (See Table 1.) After reviewing course syllabi and assignments, they found that, while many courses touched briefly on SEL competencies, no course addressed them explicitly. Over the course of 3 years, faculty members read and conducted research and convened to determine how collectively the department could better address SEL in its coursework.

In 2009, Markowitz, with the support of SJSU Dean Susan Meyers, founded CRTWC as an organizational research unit within the university, focusing on integrating SEL into university courses and fieldwork. When California adopted a new set of academic content standards in 2010, the Common Core State Standards, CRTWC, and SJSU faculty in the professional learning community mapped the standards to SEL competencies to see how SEL might be included in academic content (see Appendix B). Some teachers, including current department chair Professor Patricia Swanson, piloted lessons addressing SEL in their academic curriculum courses. "There are competencies in there that intersect with every discipline," says Swanson. Recognizing the interdependence of academic, social, and emotional content was a turning point for some faculty members. Swanson, for example, recounts:

I came on to the project something as a skeptic. As I learned a little bit more, actually, I came to realize what I knew all along, which is ... that math in many ways can be the most devastating of subject areas for students and issues around self-efficacy or liking the topic. I think that became quite a hook for me.

Because SEL is core to all learning, SJSU faculty have come to the conclusion that classroom teachers should support elementary school students' social and emotional competencies in all classes, including those that focus on traditional academic curriculum. "The direction we've taken is ... it's a lens that you use when you're teaching in the content areas," says Swanson. "For instance, ... how, when you're teaching math, do you set the stage? Do you develop some of these competencies?" An integrated approach to SEL is in contrast to the idea that SEL is something that should be taught in a stand-alone program as "something you do Tuesdays and Thursdays."<sup>17</sup>

Because SEL is core to all learning, SJSU faculty have come to the conclusion that classroom teachers should support elementary school students' social and emotional competencies in all classes, including those that focus on traditional academic curriculum.

CRTWC, in consultation with SJSU faculty, Sunnyvale School District cooperating teachers, and Zaretta Hammond, eventually created the SEDTL Anchor Competencies Schema. In addition to laying out a philosophy for the teaching of SEL in preservice education, the schema outlines seven fundamental competencies teachers and students should use in teaching and learning, and how, specifically, educators can support their students' skill development.

Integrating SEL in core coursework, including learning theory, classroom management, and academic curriculum courses (described in depth in a later section), is practical for faculty and teacher candidates with limited time in a teacher education program. It is similarly practical for teachers, who often feel they do not have time to teach additional SEL lessons. Swanson explains that integration of SEL in content courses

was always a piece of sustainability, because it couldn't be some extra program. It had to be embedded in the very work I was doing in the content area where I was working.... I didn't think one more program was going to be any huge answer for the schools or for our preservice teachers.

### **Evaluation of progress**

In 2014–15, CRTWC employed researchers at WestEd, a nonprofit research organization focused on education, to begin a 3-year evaluation to examine the impact of CRTWC's work at SJSU. The review included interviews and focus groups with faculty, university supervisors, teacher candidates, and cooperating teachers; review of key documents including course syllabi; and a survey of 125 teacher candidates. Year 1 data were published in a white paper by CRTWC and the WestEd study's lead researcher.<sup>18</sup> Interviews and focus groups were conducted during the 2014–15 school year and reflect participants' perspectives at that point in time. (The study did not present a control or comparison group.)

Among elementary teacher education faculty, the study found that professors believed their perspectives on teaching had changed so that they now recognize the importance of teacher and learner social and emotional skill development. Faculty had adjusted activities, assessments, and readings accordingly to integrate SEL across SJSU's program. Integration of SEL was additionally recognized at the department level as one of the program's "key programmatic strands." Understanding of SEL became one of the components in choosing new faculty members, as well as in selecting cooperating school districts.

The survey of teacher candidates provides insight into how they perceive the focus on SEDTL at SJSU. Completed by 125 teacher candidates (63% of those contacted), the study found strong agreement that SEDTL was incorporated in course content, particularly the promotion of a growth mindset—the belief that one can improve over time with effort—toward teaching. The majority of teacher candidates believed that the emphasis was "just right" on certain competencies, such as effectively teaching students from different backgrounds and developing students' growth mindset (73% and 67%, respectively). Teacher candidates also responded favorably when asked about their own preparedness to teach: for example, their readiness to establish a safe and supportive classroom environment, create and manage small learning groups, and create lessons that integrate social and emotional competencies. More than half of teacher candidates, however, said they would have liked more emphasis on lesson planning that integrates SEDTL skills and support in addressing student status issues in the classroom.

Researchers from WestEd stated that focus group evidence revealed that teacher candidates' preparedness to implement SEDTL in their own classrooms was often related to the strength of their cooperating teacher. Those who had strong mentors felt prepared. Several had cooperating teachers who they believed did not attend to SEDTL and pointed to experiences in the classroom in which their mentor teacher had shown a lack of social and emotional awareness with children. These teacher candidates said they had fewer opportunities to practice SEDTL in student teaching. Regardless, almost all teacher candidates interviewed expressed that they would certainly try to address SEL in their classes as new teachers.

In the third and final year of the evaluation (2016–17), WestEd examined the experiences and practices of six teacher graduates from the Multiple Subject Credential program at SJSU, who had graduated within the last 4 years and were full-time teachers at CRTWC's Lab District. With one exception, it was the participants' first or second year teaching. The purpose of the evaluation was to determine to what extent the graduates had integrated SEDTL practices in their teaching. Data collection consisted of an initial pre-observation interview, two observations followed by an interview, and a focus group with the six teacher graduates together.<sup>19</sup>

During observations, teacher graduates were scored using the CRTWC Classroom Observation Protocol, which was developed in collaboration with CRTWC leaders during Year 2 of the evaluation (this protocol has been revised since to more explicitly reflect attention to the SEDTL/CRT anchor competencies). The instrument consisted of 27 items: five items related to "Lesson Plan Design" and 22 items related to "Teacher Behavior." (See Table 3.) Teachers were rated on a scale of 1 (not evident) to 5 (very evident).

When comparing results from the first and second rounds of observations, scores on the Teacher Behavior component of the CRTWC Classroom Observation Protocol generally increased from the beginning to the end of the school year. During the second observation, candidates had average scores of 4 or higher on the 5-point scale on nine items out of 21, indicating that they were reaching a level of practice often expected of more senior teachers in some areas. Teacher graduates did particularly well displaying behaviors such as "creat[ing] a physical space that facilitates cooperative interactions," "demonstrat[ing] patience with students," and "actively listen[ing] to students" during the first and second observation. Other behaviors, such as "referring to how the brain functions" and "modeling self-reflection" were less evident in most of the classrooms across both observations.

Teacher graduates' scores on the lesson plans were inconsistent over the course of the year. In fact, scores on the Lesson Plan component of the CRTWC Classroom Observation Protocol were higher at the beginning of the school year compared to the end of the school year.

Data from the individual interviews and focus group revealed that SJSU teacher graduates valued SEL and used these strategies daily in their practices as new teachers. Every teacher graduate indicated that they consciously integrated SEL competencies to support student learning. In addition, teacher graduates also reported that professors in their credential program shaped their commitment to using an SEL approach in their teaching; SJSU faculty not only helped them understand SEL, but they also modeled it, further shaping teacher graduates' commitment to this work. Although teacher graduates varied in their ability to successfully implement SEL, they indicated they were still seeking ways to better reach the most vulnerable students in their classrooms and discussed their use of SEL strategies with struggling students.

**Table 3**  
**CRTWC Classroom Observation Protocol Items**

| Lesson Plan Design |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1                  | The instructional strategies and activities reflect attention to students' experiences, prior knowledge, and/or learning styles   |
| 2                  | The lesson plan includes opportunities for student reflection & closure   |
| 3                  | The lesson plan addresses the social-emotional skills needed to be taught for student success (e.g., fostering a growth mindset, building cooperative skills, encouraging perseverance) |
| 4                  | This lesson plans for the assessment of SEL objectives as appropriate   |
| 5                  | This lesson encourages students to seek and value alternative modes of investigation or problem solving   |
| Teacher Behavior   |   |
| 6                  | Implements lessons that encourage student-student talk  |
| 7                  | Creates a physical space that facilitates cooperative interactions  |
| 8                  | Promotes productive student discourse by having students build upon each other's ideas  |
| 9                  | Teaches and/or practices cooperative learning skills  |
| 10                 | Demonstrates patience with students   |
| 11                 | Fosters and acknowledges different points of view   |
| 12                 | Actively listens to students  |
| 13                 | Demonstrates flexibility and responsiveness   |
| 14                 | Models self-reflection  |
| 15                 | Provides students with opportunities for self-reflection  |
| 16                 | Models how to approach task with growth mindset   |
| 17                 | Provides feedback that encourages students to persevere and work actively on assigned tasks   |
| 18                 | Refers to how the brain functions   |
| 19                 | Encourages risk-taking behavior   |
| 20                 | Encourages students to engage in productive self-talk   |
| 21                 | Uses mindfulness practices  |
| 22                 | Students encouraged to make reparations   |
| 23                 | Responds productively to a challenging student  |
| 24                 | De-escalates difficult situations to get students back on track   |
| 25                 | The teacher appears confident in his/her ability to teach the subject matter  |
| 26                 | The teacher was able to "read" the students' level of understanding and adjusted instruction accordingly  |
| 27                 | The teacher's questioning strategies were likely to enhance the development of student conceptual understanding and SEL skill development   |

Source: Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child. (2016). CRTWC Classroom Observation Protocol Items. Reprinted with permission.

Results from Year 3 of the evaluation led CRTWC to realize that educators working in teacher preparation programs, both at the university and in the field, need to share a common SEDTL/CRT framework and language that explicitly defines what the competencies look like in a classroom and offers teacher moves and strategies that help teacher candidates develop specific ways to use an SEDTL/CRT lens as an academic intervention. While attention to SEDTL in the teacher preparation program at SJSU impacted the thinking of the teacher candidates studied, a greater specificity of what integrating SEDTL looks like in practice is still needed. Further research is needed to explore whether there is a continuum in teaching with an SEDTL lens—that is, whether certain teacher behaviors would be expected before others, and how they influence student outcomes.

## **Key Components of SEL Integration in SJSU Coursework**

How, then, is SJSU integrating a focus on SEL in its coursework? There are four general ways in which faculty embed SEDTL in preservice education:

1. Including ongoing opportunities for teacher candidates to reflect on their own social and emotional competencies and their teaching philosophy
2. Providing strategies for developing a safe, supportive, inclusive learning environment
3. Offering examples of how to integrate the teaching of social and emotional competencies in academic curriculum
4. Supporting teacher candidates in the field to practice, reflect on, and identify SEDTL in student teaching

### **1. Teacher candidates reflect on their own social and emotional competencies and teaching philosophies**

At SJSU, faculty focus on reflective practices that ask teacher candidates to continually review their own social and emotional competencies and the extent to which their teaching practice reflects their stated goals.

#### ***Teacher candidates reflect on their own social and emotional competencies***

Adults' own social and emotional competence has been shown to have an important effect on student achievement and classroom climate.<sup>20</sup> Markowitz explains,

As we considered the needs of our candidates to become effective teachers, we recognized the importance of addressing both teacher and their students' SEL skill development.... This shift toward explicit recognition of both teacher and student needs led to course content that addressed both.<sup>21</sup>

One strategy some professors use to encourage teacher candidates to be self-reflective is modeling their own thought processes as they teach and explaining how their own emotions affect them as educators. SJSU Professor Colette Rabin describes how she modeled mediating an emotional circumstance in class after getting upsetting news that her mother was stuck in a hurricane zone just as she began to teach one of her courses. She was visibly shaken, but she realized it was a teachable moment for the teacher candidates.

All my students [teacher candidates] were staring at me, and I said to them, “I’m going to model for you: I’m mediating my emotions and I’ll tell you what’s going on.” And then I said, “The beauty of teaching is I have an opportunity to focus on your needs now rather than my own and not drone on about my own worries.” I said, “When you’re a new teacher and you make that shift, it’s hard because there’s so many different things you’re worried about ... what your lesson plan is, getting through your plan, and then the people watching you getting through your plan. But the more you can think about what your students need, the more, ironically, you get through your own plans as a teacher.

In addition to modeling her own thought processes, Classroom Management Professor Lara Kassab asks her teacher candidates reflective questions related to SEL throughout her course. She asks, for example, “What are you thinking here? ... What are your feelings? Who do you think you are as a teacher, and how does that play out in the decisions that you make in the classroom?” She also starts each class with a mindfulness activity to promote self-reflection. According to Patricia Jennings of the University of Virginia, mindfulness, “the ability to stay focused on one’s present experience with nonjudgmental awareness,” can help teachers manage their own emotions and “promote the calm, relaxed, but enlivened classroom environment that children need to learn.”<sup>22</sup> These questions build on teacher candidates’ knowledge of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)’s five SEL competencies that are introduced in the Psychology Foundations course in which teacher candidates are asked to reflect on their own social and emotional strengths and weakness in small-group discussion.

These strategies work to further one of the performance expectations stated in the Classroom Management syllabus, that teacher candidates “write reflective statements that incorporate research, observations, and attention to personal strengths and challenges as a developing educator.” While Kassab notes that it can be uncomfortable for some teacher candidates to talk about their feelings, especially those who think SEL is a “huggy, lovey, squishy thing that I’m not going to do as a teacher,” having a language to talk about SEL and describe their own emotions is important for building self-awareness. She notes, “One of the realizations I had was that I need to be more explicit about teacher candidates’ own self-monitoring and SEL.” She now devotes two class sessions to self-monitoring. The first focuses on the teacher candidates’ own monitoring of their emotions, “and then the second session, now that they have kind of become a little bit aware about their own self-monitoring, asks them, ‘How are you helping your students monitor themselves?’”

Teacher candidates are also required to film themselves teaching, self-reflect on their teaching practice on a rubric, and then watch each other and debrief in small groups. “The difference between what I planned and what happened is oceans apart usually,” says Classroom Management Professor Grinnell Smith. “It gives teacher candidates some really practical experience looking at themselves from the perspective of someone else.” He prompts teacher candidates to think not about what went wrong in the execution of their lesson, but what it teaches them to do next—an exercise in growth mindset that has been shown to be important for both student and teacher resilience.

### *Teacher candidates reflect on their teaching philosophy*

Rather than choose classroom management strategies from “a bag of tricks,” SJSU faculty’s goal is that teacher candidates articulate a teaching philosophy and be able to say, “I make a conscious decision that this is good for students.”

A culminating reflective activity in the Classroom Management course is for teacher candidates to create a folder for a substitute teacher who might teach their class on a day they are absent. One component of the folder is a letter to the substitute teacher that describes their classroom’s norms, procedures, and teaching philosophy in a concrete way. The folder also includes a classroom map, in which teacher candidates explain how their classroom’s layout will affect different types of learning, such as independent and group work. Explains Kassab:

We talk about how their management style will dictate what ... they need in their room. So if they tell me they’re going to use restorative justice and I look at their classroom and their classroom map has nowhere quiet and away from everybody for students to resolve their differences, they need to think about how are they taking their theory and planning for it to be in action.

One teacher candidate interviewed said this was a useful experience for her as a student teacher, getting her to reflect on both her desire to promote group work through clustered seating arrangements, and also her own limitations as a first-year teacher to keep students on task, which can be harder when students are working in groups.

The substitute folder provides an opportunity for teacher candidates to reflect on what they want their students to get out of their class, and to consider how these goals are reflected in everyday classroom practices. After learning many classroom management strategies throughout the course, including setting group norms and expectations, setting up self-directed learning in stations or centers, developing conflict plans and ways to calm students down, and teaching students strategies to self-monitor their behavior and learning,<sup>23</sup> teacher candidates are asked to reflect on these practices and how they relate to learning theory and child development.

Professors say that there are some decisions about classroom norms and routines in particular that teacher candidates wrestle with in relation to their teaching philosophy. One common source of angst is whether they will use behavior charts—color-coded charts commonly used in elementary schools to indicate visually to students whether they are making good choices. Each card tends to be tied to a consequence. For example, if a student moves from green to yellow, that is typically accompanied by a verbal warning; a change from yellow to red might result in a time-out or a trip to the office. Behavior charts are popular in many schools because they provide a clear management structure, but teacher candidates express concern that they create an environment of shaming and encourage students to think that they are “bad” if they have frequent color changes.<sup>24</sup> According to Professor Smith, deciding what they will do in their own classrooms is a challenge for teacher candidates that they need to work through.

They’re seeing these things that we’re saying “these work in the shorter term, but they don’t work in the long term”—and it’s actually worse than that. They are counterproductive in the long term. And their question is, “Yeah, but everybody uses them. What if I’m in a school where this is mandated by the administration? What do I do?”



Faculty ensure that teacher candidates have time to discuss some of these key questions, so instructors set aside time at the end of every class period to have these conversations. Some teacher candidates, for example, decide to use behavior charts in their own classrooms, but instead of making them public, put them on students' desks and ask them to self-monitor because that fits their teaching philosophy better. Discussion time is invaluable for building the reflective practice that they will need when they go into their own classrooms and no longer have the support and guidance of faculty.

“If you want compliance, you can do that through a very authoritarian approach. But what I think is the most successful is to actually coordinate and orchestrate the classroom to build a community of students.”

## **2. Curriculum focuses on developing a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment**

SJSU faculty emphasize the importance of building a supportive classroom environment and strong student–teacher relationships to support students socially, emotionally, and academically. Having a classroom community that is built on trust allows students to take intellectual risks. It also sets the stage for strong classroom management. Says Kassab,

If you want compliance, you can do that through a very authoritarian approach. But what I think is the most successful is to actually coordinate and orchestrate the classroom to build a community of students, who learn to not just see you as a part of their lives, but each other as a part of their lives.

### ***Modeling community building in the university classroom***

To create a strong classroom community, CRTWC advises that teachers set classroom norms together, foster engagement through culture-building activities, and attend to classroom status issues that cause unequal student participation or engagement.<sup>25</sup>

SJSU professors and supervisors provide examples in their own courses and seminars to show teacher candidates how to create a welcoming environment. In Multicultural Studies, for example, Professor Colette Rabin asks teacher candidates to set class norms for the environment they want in that course, including setting expectations for class discussions. She explains:

I talk about how in the class we're going to talk about controversial ... personal beliefs and worldviews ... and we're going to confront alternative views and cultures.... In order to do that we have to create a caring community. And one way we do it is to really reflect deeply on what would create a safe place to actually have a dialogue.

As the course progresses, the class returns to the norms that they set as a group. Rabin frequently asks teacher candidates to reflect on whether diverse perspectives are shared and how often individuals are contributing, and she actively welcomes “quiet voices to share so that we begin to get cross-cultural conversation.” She in turn encourages teacher candidates to do the same in their own classrooms as teachers.

“During the whole process I’m asking them at every step, ‘Why do you think I did that? Why did it last three sessions? Why are we still working on norms?’” She then addresses how these norms for dialogue are related to SEL and learning theory, such as building a sense of social awareness and promoting student agency, because students come up with the rules themselves. An important component of this modeling, Rabin explains, is explicitly describing her own thinking to teacher candidates so that they can understand and learn from her thought process as an educator.

I have them think about how reflecting on your choices in an audible way for your students is a way to model moral reflection. Actually being meta[cognitive] about it while you’re doing it and then asking them to engage in that conversation with you.

In the Classroom Management course, professors start each class period with a Morning Meeting as described in the opening vignette. The goal of this meeting is twofold: to develop a strong community among the teacher candidates, and to model how they might do so with their own students. “After we have finished each step of the Morning Meeting, we debrief—what was the activity, what did it do as a benefit for students, what would it do as a benefit for you?” says Kassab. She then connects the activities to learning theory, asking teacher candidates what the activity might foster in the classroom and what components of SEL it might support. Other activities are modeled briefly, although faculty explain that they would be integrated much more in an elementary classroom. For example, professors and university supervisors preview get-to-know-you games, songs, and chants, all of which encourage community building and a sense of shared experience. These community-building and mindfulness activities resonate with teacher candidates. “They’re very simple things, but it really helps to clear my mind, to put my pressures aside,” states a teacher candidate.

#### ***Modeling and teaching explicit strategies to build trusting relationships***

SJSU faculty also address the importance of building strong teacher–student relationships in conjunction with building a strong classroom community. Building trusting relationships is CRTWC’s first anchor competency, because “building trust and rapport between students and the teacher is foundational for all other social and cognitive interactions.”<sup>26</sup> Yet faculty note that teacher candidates often do not know how, specifically, to build them.

To set the foundation for relationship building, teacher candidates in the Classroom Management course are required to complete low-inference observation of focal students during their first semester of student teaching, for which they spend about two and a half days in a classroom per week. Teacher candidates identify three students (one with special needs, one English language learner, and another who “struggles to fit in to the classroom community”) and observe them in class, taking notes on their behavior while reserving judgment. Teacher candidates are asked to observe “how that student is engaging in class—what things make the student perk up and get engaged and when do they seem mentally checked out? Who are they as people? What do they like to do? What are their interests?” A core part of the activity is that teacher candidates can really get to know the students on a personal level and understand the range of personalities and behavior they might see in their classes. “You can’t teach students unless you realize that they’re thinking and feeling human beings and find ways to learn more about how they think and how they feel,” Kassab explains.

Low-inference observations help reinforce the course assumptions that Kassab says frame how one understands classroom management: “One: Students are always learning. Two: Students have reasons for their actions. And three: A great majority of the time, those reasons have little to do with the teacher.”<sup>27</sup> These guide the course, she explains, because teachers often have a very teacher-centric vision of student action, which may lead them to take negative behavior personally. Once teacher candidates learn to recognize students’ actual motivation for action, they can respond more appropriately to the root cause.

Professors and university supervisors promote finding time for one-on-one interaction with students to build relationships. One strategy that some faculty advocate is “two-by-ten,” or finding 2 minutes a day for 10 consecutive days to connect with difficult-to-reach students: in class, at recess, or after school.<sup>28</sup> Supervisor Bonnie Jacobson, who, like other supervisors, runs a seminar to discuss student teaching and provides coaching to student teachers, says,

If [teacher candidates are] having a problem with a certain student and they’re starting to sound and look like they are not liking that student anymore, then I suggest one-on-one time to get to know him better. Many times that solves that kind of problem.

Through this process, the teacher candidate learns what might have been behind the difficult behavior the student was exhibiting.

### **3. Social and emotional competencies are integrated in academic curriculum courses**

In addition to stressing the importance of teacher reflective practices and creating a supportive learning environment, SJSU faculty emphasize the importance of addressing students’ social and emotional skills, habits, and mindsets with academic content. CASEL identifies integration of social-emotional learning within academic content as a key component of instruction, along with direct instruction of social and emotional competencies.<sup>29</sup> Research shows that students benefit most from SEL programs when they are integrated in teachers’ instructional practices as well as in the daily interactions and culture of the school.<sup>30</sup> There is still little research on how SEL can be woven into daily practice, however.

At SJSU, social, emotional, and academic instruction are intentionally woven together, says Swanson. As a mathematics professor, she explains, “Many of the SEL-oriented type activities I do are really in line with some of the challenges of teaching math and specific math content.” This section provides three examples of how SJSU faculty guide teacher candidates toward supporting certain social and emotional competencies in academic coursework, including

1. developing student self-management and autonomy in mathematics,
2. building a growth mindset in reading, and
3. encouraging students to take multiple perspectives in history and literature.

#### ***Developing student self-management and autonomy in mathematics***

A key theme in Professor Patricia Swanson’s mathematics course, which she taught before becoming the department chair, was to “teach study skills that promote goal setting, planning, and self-regulation in the mathematics classroom.”<sup>31</sup>

One specific area in which teacher candidates practice giving students opportunity for building self-awareness is through Number Talks—short classroom conversations about mental mathematics.<sup>32</sup> In a Number Talk, the classroom teacher gives students a computational problem, which students must think through quietly on their own. Students then share their answer with a partner—and, importantly, the strategy they used to

“You’re saying to kids, ‘Rather than me telling you how to solve this problem, I have absolute faith that you have the power to come up with remarkable strategies.’”

determine the answer. A few students then share these strategies with the group. The problems change daily, but the process is routine such that the teacher needs to intervene and speak little. Instead, the teacher records what the students say on the board and asks supportive questions such as “Who did it in a different way? Can you tell me more about that?”

When a student identifies a new way of approaching a problem, the teacher names it after him or her: For example, counting by 5s might be “Wendy’s strategy.” Swanson explains that passing responsibility to the students fosters many SEL competencies, including a strong sense of self-efficacy.

You’re saying to kids, “Rather than me telling you how to solve this problem, I have absolute faith that you have the power to come up with remarkable strategies. From all the strategies we generate together, you’ll choose the ones that you like the most, that work the best for you, and they will become your own.” ... So in some ways, it goes back to how children view intelligence. I want them to see that being smart in math is being able to use a lot of different strategies to solve problems, and hopefully choosing the more efficient strategies sooner rather than later.

Making students responsible for teaching their strategies to each other additionally promotes communication skills and classroom community building. Says Swanson:

When doing, for example, a Number Talk leading into developing basic fact strategies, you want children listening to each other, trying to understand one another’s strategies and building off each other’s ideas. Making statements like, “I agree that Nancy’s strategy works, but I don’t like to subtract, so instead I added up from the smaller number....” These kinds of whole-class discussions promote classroom community by teaching students to listen to one another’s ideas, agree or disagree, and reflect on both their own ideas and others’ thinking.

In her course, Swanson devoted a class period to having teacher candidates practice facilitating Number Talks in small groups. From there, teacher candidates were asked to give a Number Talk in their student teaching placements, which they would videotape and debrief with their supervisors. In this way, teacher candidates became more comfortable with the strategy—including using supportive questioning—and were able to reflect on their own practice.

Swanson also uses teaching basic facts as an opportunity to help students develop self-regulation. She says that many schools use stars on a class fact chart to show progress, “which is very public and makes status problems worse.” Instead, she uses basic facts as an opportunity to help

students learn to self-assess and monitor their own progress. Because learning all the facts can be overwhelming, she wants students to learn to “chunk” large tasks like this, to focus on groups of facts they do not know, develop strategies, practice using them, and monitor their learning.

She suggests to teacher candidates that when they have their own classroom, they provide their students with a folder in which they chart their own progress over time. Using the folder, students can more easily chunk big tasks into smaller, more manageable components.

We want to use that as an opportunity to cultivate for students, “Oh, this is a great big task—so, what am I going to do? I’m going to take a deep breath, I’m going to chunk it, I’m going to self-assess and note my progress.”

To help students learn to manage these kinds of challenging tasks, Swanson also suggests teaching elementary students to do “positive self-talk”—for example, reminding oneself to chunk an overwhelming task, to take it one step at a time, and to celebrate each step forward. The teacher’s job is to support students in seeing that they are learning.

### ***Building a growth mindset and perseverance in literacy***

Research shows that having a growth mindset empowers learning, whereas having a fixed mindset leads to disengagement from difficult tasks.<sup>33</sup> Literacy Professor Jolynn Asato identifies two places in literacy instruction in which teacher candidates can foster the development of a growth mindset: guided reading, the practice of having students read leveled books at their instructional level under the guidance of a teacher; and writing workshop, in which the teacher models and coaches students through the various stages of the writing process.

Guided reading is an ideal environment for elementary school students to identify areas for growth and strategies they can use as learners to improve because they are working in their zone of proximal development.

Guided reading is an ideal environment for elementary school students to identify areas for growth and strategies they can use as learners to improve because they are working in their zone of proximal development—meaning that texts are just hard enough that they are challenging but not so hard that they will lead to frustration. According to Asato:

With guided reading, there’s an opportunity in the structure of the lesson where you listen to each student read and you give each student a teaching point—like after you listen to them read, you decide on the spot, I’m going to highlight this great strategy that they used or I’m going to say, “OK, you do this, now do this.”

Highlighting the strong practices students already employ develops their sense of self-efficacy, Asato explains. In guided reading, the teacher may prompt students to use these self-directed strategies when they make a mistake or have a misconception, reminding students that they have the capacity to work through the difficult parts of reading on their own.

Teacher candidates are encouraged to identify strengths not just in instruction, but in assessment as well. “The orientation that I take toward assessment and literacy assessment is all about cultivating perseverance,” explains Asato. “One of the big literacy practices is to be able to implement and assess a particular form of assessment or the running record.” In a running record, the teacher listens to a student read a passage for a short period of time, marking the specific errors they make and categorizing these errors by type. Asato says that most schools approach running records as a rote, “technical” process. She likes to “recast” the running record for teacher candidates as “a way that highlights students’ potential.... We analyze it for reading strategies that the students are reaching for and not quite there yet, like it’s an evidence of their thinking.” In her course, teacher candidates practice completing a running record, and Asato prompts them to identify the progress that their students are making and the strategies they need to improve—rather than simply the number of words read per minute and what they got wrong. Asato believes that by reframing the way they see assessment in their own minds, teacher candidates will send a different message to students about their competence and ability to improve over time.

Another opportunity for explicitly addressing growth mindset is writing, since writing is a personal, emotionally taxing enterprise that requires perseverance. Since part of writer’s workshop involves the classroom teacher modeling his or her own process, Asato encourages teacher candidates to take the time to acknowledge their own emotions to students. This practice is called reciprocal vulnerability, which CRTWC explains is fostered when “we share our own stories and aspects of our lives beyond school with our students.”<sup>54</sup> Oftentimes I would put this writing up there, sharing fears and apprehension” that children might be feeling as well, Asato says.

The classroom teacher can then remind students that writing is an iterative process through which one’s work can continuously improve. This is particularly relevant when students engage in peer editing and providing feedback to one another, since giving and receiving feedback on personal work can be challenging but is also an opportunity to grow. Part of the course is focused on getting teacher candidates to provide formative feedback to their students in a way that promotes a growth mindset and to appropriately “correct” students’ mistakes. At the end, as is typical with writing workshops, teacher candidates are encouraged to celebrate students’ work and accomplishments.

### ***Taking multiple perspectives through history and literature***

Being able to take multiple perspectives is an ideal life skill to explore through history and literature, especially as it relates to the Common Core standards.

At SJSU, Professor Rabin promotes multiple perspective taking through literature in her Multicultural Studies course. In one assignment, teacher candidates lead their peers in a literature study using a text that reflects a “counternarrative,” a perspective that contrasts with the beliefs that many people hold. Examples of readings include Francisco Jiménez’s *The Circuit*, a story about a migrant student, and a selection from Anne Fadiman’s *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, which is about a Hmong refugee family. According to Professor Rabin,

The purpose of this project is to engage students in learning about the lives and/ or schooling of diverse students and their families through reading and analyzing a narrative, and then through facilitating class to teach what you’ve learned ... teaching about the implications of the story for teaching, not the particular story per se.

This assignment is designed to get teacher candidates to reflect on their own beliefs about students. As part of the lesson, teacher candidates are required to run a classroom discussion, giving them practice facilitating a conversation in which students challenge one another's ideas and points of view. The lesson also primes teacher candidates to think about how they might teach diverse perspective taking to their own students.

In the Social Studies Methods course, teacher candidates must complete an assignment in which they design a historical unit identifying multiple texts that cover a range of perspectives. Asato, who currently teaches the course, explains,

A big thing in Common Core is to explore events through different perspectives. In social studies, there is a tension between [teachers saying], 'I need to teach what's in the textbook' as opposed to [other perspectives].... The textbook might represent one narrative and then it's up to you as a teacher to start to find the other narratives.

Children's books provide a useful way to present many ways of looking at the same event, since they can be relatively short and accessible. Asato gives the example of telling the story of Christopher Columbus through multiple books, which the class can then compare and contrast. Having these multiple perspectives is also important to help ensure that students can see themselves in the readings (a mirror) as well as learn about others' points of view (a window). These multiple perspectives also provide an opportunity for the teacher to have students work through disagreements and conflict.

#### **4. Teacher candidates are supported in the field**

As in most teacher preparation programs, a large part of teacher candidates' time is spent in the classroom. In their first semester of student teaching, teacher candidates typically spend 2 full days and 1 half day per week in an elementary classroom. In their second semester, they are in the classroom full time and attend their university classes in the evenings.<sup>35</sup> Life as a new teacher can be chaotic. "When you're working in the field, it rules so much of your life," says Swanson. "It is the place where interactions between multiple players, who may want different things, all come to a head."

Preservice programs have two key roles in supporting teacher candidates in a successful student teaching experience. First, they must provide strong placements, in which teacher candidates learn from effective cooperating teachers, the mentor teachers with whom teacher candidates do their student teaching. Second, they must build a bridge between teacher candidates' coursework and the classroom: giving teacher candidates the supervision and coaching they need to successfully apply reflective practices; implement strategies for building classroom community; and integrate social, emotional, and academic instruction.

SJSU places student teachers in roughly 15 districts around the Bay Area. Given the program's focus on social justice, at least one of a teacher candidate's two student teaching placements is in a low-income school with a significant population of second language learners, typically in an urban area. The university's influence over which classroom teachers become cooperating teachers is limited, as each district has its own process for identifying and selecting candidates.

Typically, district human resources departments identify cooperating teachers. In one cooperating district, Sunnyvale School District, teachers volunteer at each school site or are nominated by administrators. Training for cooperating teachers can thus help set common expectations and build a shared understanding of SEDTL.

Training for cooperating teachers can thus help set common expectations and build a shared understanding of the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning.

Because the student teaching phase of the program can be particularly challenging for teacher candidates, the university supervisor is very important as a support and guide. Says one teacher candidate in her second semester of student teaching in Sunnyvale School District, “The professors are up here at 35,000 feet, flying through the sky, and [my supervisor is] down here on the ground with me, [saying] ‘What do you need to do tomorrow to make tomorrow be more successful?’”

Supervisor Marianne Mehuys says that the first step for her as a supervisor in supporting SEDTL is to help teacher candidates recognize and name how SEL plays a role in the classroom.

I’m taking the [teacher candidates] on a journey that starts with recognizing that SEL is a factor in teaching. It’s theoretical in all these courses, but when they get in the classroom with 6-year-olds or 10-year-olds, the first thing that they need to start doing is recognizing, well, that kid couldn’t do his work today because he was upset about something at home. They need to see it, they need to start to identify it and recognize it.

After recognizing how students’ social and emotional development influences their actions in the classroom, Mehuys says the next step is to provide teacher candidates with concrete strategies to address problems of practice:

Then, they need to start to look to how does the teacher address it. What is the teacher doing explicitly behind the scenes, setting up pairs in certain ways or groups in certain ways or talking to students before whatever they’re doing? Then, eventually [they move] into how do I build this into my lessons? How do I identify the parts where I might need to do something about this?

Having supervisors and cooperating teachers who understand and use the same SEDTL language as university professors may help solidify teacher candidates’ learning. Teacher candidates want to see and be coached on concrete strategies that allow them to apply what they learned during their university coursework. These mentors’ knowledge of the content taught in academic curriculum courses is thus important.

In the 2013–14 school year, CRTWC extended its SEDTL training to university supervisors and cooperating teachers with the goal of “developing a common language related to SEL, sharing the strategies and content being provided in the pre-service courses, and developing the cooperating teachers’ skills in coaching for SEDTL with their teacher candidates and students.”<sup>36</sup> CRTWC provided four training sessions to 13 university supervisors during their monthly meetings. Swanson says that her colleague, Markowitz, increased the faculty’s attention to supporting teacher

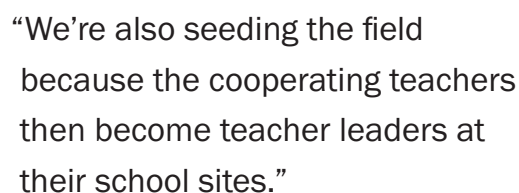


candidates' own social and emotional development as they navigate the demands of the classroom as new teachers. "It's not just how do you teach students these skills, it's how do beginning teachers use these skills, in terms of coping with things."

CRTWC also provides optional professional development for a small group of cooperating teachers each semester in one of the cooperating school districts, Sunnyvale School District. Since 2013–14, CRTWC has trained 25 cooperating teachers across the district. CRTWC began its seminars on SEDTL for cooperating teachers because it recognized the importance of having a strong model teacher. Having a strong cooperating teacher as a model is "invaluable," says one teacher candidate placed at Lakewood Elementary in Sunnyvale. By connecting cooperating teachers to the university, says Markowitz, teacher candidates are "getting that modeling and practice and opportunity to reflect with their cooperating teachers, and ... by doing that, we're also seeding the field [because] the cooperating teachers then become teacher leaders at their school sites."

The cooperating teachers that CRTWC works with participate in four 2-hour sessions each year, which are predicated on deepening their understanding of the SEDTL anchor competencies, the teacher moves, and how mentors can support new teachers in teaching with a social and emotional lens. Thowdis says that the seminar is built around the relationship that the cooperating teacher has with the teacher candidate and how to connect to the language and coursework they receive at the university. To develop teacher leadership at the site level, Markowitz and Thowdis have invited these cooperating teachers to lead seminars themselves. This model has been successful in their pilot program in Sunnyvale School District, notes Markowitz, where some of the cooperating teachers received their initial training at SJSU. (This case study discusses more about how CRTWC trains cooperating teachers in Part II on Lakewood Elementary School in the Sunnyvale School District.)

In the WestEd evaluation of SJSU and CRTWC's work, for which interviews were conducted in the 2014–15 school year, university supervisors (in interviews and focus groups) reported that after the CRTWC sessions, they felt more comfortable supporting teachers in the field in SEDTL than they had before. However, survey responses from teacher candidates and focus group data suggest that addressing SEDTL in fieldwork is still an area for growth.<sup>37</sup> Just over 60% of teacher candidates surveyed agreed with the statements "field experience supported the development of my ability to foster k–8 students' social-emotional skills" and "field experience supported my development of social-emotional competencies." Teacher candidates were more consistently positive about their coursework than their fieldwork, suggesting that the focus on SEDTL in fieldwork might be less consistent. Several teacher candidates and university supervisors noted in focus groups that their cooperating teachers were not as strong as they would have liked in SEDTL. Those who did see good modeling, however, said that it inspired their own practice.



"We're also seeding the field because the cooperating teachers then become teacher leaders at their school sites."

## Next Steps for SJSU

The work that SJSU and CRTWC have done to integrate a focus on SEDTL in preservice education offers some explicit examples of the ways in which SEL can be integrated into coursework and provides many important lessons for the field. Yet both organizations say that their work is far from over. They continue to work to develop a consistent, well-sequenced focus on SEDTL across courses; setting the stage for strong fieldwork experiences by connecting university supervisors and cooperating teachers to SEDTL coursework; and having a robust, ongoing evaluation process to determine the areas in which teacher candidates need more support.

### Developing a well-sequenced, practical focus on SEDTL

The evaluation conducted by WestEd showed that after years of working with CRTWC, SJSU faculty more consistently talk about SEL across courses and have a more unified mission and vision for how SEDTL fits into their coursework. The evaluation notes, however, that “work still needs to be completed to [fully] institutionalize SEDTL in our department” to ensure that SEL is uniformly addressed throughout the curriculum.<sup>38</sup>

SJSU has done a particularly good job in setting the foundation for understanding SEL in its theory courses and finding ways to integrate a focus on SEL in certain academic curriculum courses. CRTWC is working now to ensure that this focus extends to all courses and to identify more concrete teaching strategies that teacher candidates can take with them to the classroom, such as the examples from mathematics, literacy, and social studies described in this case study. In addition, CRTWC was, at the time of writing, in the process of identifying more strategies that SJSU professors are currently using in their courses that might be scaled. This ongoing work will be important to ensuring that teacher candidates feel equipped not just with the theory, but also with the practical resources they need to address SEDTL as new teachers.<sup>39</sup> This may include teaching teacher candidates about the stages of child development as they relate to social and emotional competence, and how to provide age-appropriate instruction on social and emotional competencies in the classroom.<sup>40</sup>

### Integrating SEDTL coursework and fieldwork

An ongoing challenge for many teacher preparation programs is providing adequate training to supervisors and cooperating teachers in the field. SJSU and CRTWC have taken the important step of training a number of university supervisors and cooperating teachers on SEDTL, with all 13 supervisors at SJSU and 25 cooperating teachers in one cooperating district, Sunnyvale, receiving training. Extending this training to other cooperating teachers is an ongoing task.

The partnership between SJSU and Sunnyvale School District, a cooperating district described in the second part of this study that hires many graduates and hosts student teachers, has been ongoing, with both focused on SEDTL and learning from one another’s work. The university would like to extend this kind of relationship to other districts as well.

### Evaluation

Evaluation is an important component of any new initiative in order to see whether faculty efforts to implement teaching practices are having their intended effect in the classroom. The research conducted by CRTWC and WestEd was a good start to show the impact that focusing on SEDTL in

teacher preparation can have on teacher candidates' ability to teach with an SEL lens. The Center would like to know more about how teacher candidates' use of SEDTL in the field is affecting student learning. Key components of this analysis might include a comparison group and follow-up with a greater number of graduates after they begin their teaching careers. Other ongoing research might be conducted jointly with partnering school districts to evaluate where teachers need more support.

## Findings and Conclusions

Faculty at SJSU, with the support of former colleagues at CRTWC, have focused on the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning as a core part of their teacher preparation program. Teacher candidates are given multiple opportunities to reflect on their own social and emotional development and teaching philosophies, recognizing the key role of adults' social-emotional competence in the classroom. They are provided concrete instruction on how to develop a safe, inclusive, and engaging learning environment in which all students can thrive. And a focus on social-emotional skill development is woven into many courses in academic curriculum in a way that helps teacher candidates support students' academic learning in addition to SEL. Finally, each of these components is supported by university supervisors and cooperating teachers as teacher candidates move into student teaching. While SJSU's work is still progressing with support from CRTWC, the preservice program provides many rich lessons. These include insights into how programs can:

- **Develop teachers' social and emotional competence.** Doing so has important consequences for their students' social and emotional development, as well as the likelihood of teacher retention in their classrooms.<sup>41</sup> CRTWC's framework for addressing the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning recognizes the important role of the teacher and sets the stage for an explicit focus throughout the program on building teacher candidates' resilience, self-awareness, and ability to self-regulate. The reflective practices that SJSU has employed to encourage teacher candidates to deepen their own social and emotional development and develop a teaching philosophy consistent with their teaching practices are noteworthy in this regard.
- **Help teacher candidates set the stage for SEL by teaching them to develop a safe, inclusive, and supportive classroom environment.** Because the science of learning and development is clear that students thrive socially, emotionally, and academically in a safe and supportive learning environment,<sup>42</sup> SJSU makes the development of this welcoming environment a strong focus of its program. Faculty start by modeling the development of a positive learning environment that is inclusive of all students in their own courses and by being explicit about how teacher candidates can apply similar techniques with children. Courses that focus on creating safe and supportive classroom and school contexts (e.g., Classroom Management) are a natural place to focus on the development of a positive environment, but it is a theme that can recur across courses, including those focused on academic curriculum.

- **Integrate the teaching of SEL into the teaching of academic subjects.** SJSU illustrates how students’ social and emotional competencies can be woven into the teaching of core academic content, moving beyond the common misconception that SEL is something that is just taught in stand-alone lessons.<sup>43</sup> SJSU professors provide many examples of how a focus on social and emotional competencies can strengthen teacher candidates’ teaching of academic curricular content and support student mastery of Common Core State Standards. They also support teacher candidates in identifying the social and emotional skills that are needed in order to master academic content and include university supervisors as part of this work, so that they can support teacher candidates when they integrate what they learn in their coursework in the classroom.
- **Develop strong university–district partnerships to improve a focus on SEDTL throughout the teacher preparation pipeline.** Student teaching is where teacher candidates must apply the multiple theories and strategies they have learned in their coursework. For these experiences to be successful, teacher candidates should be able to see their cooperating teacher model good teaching that is attentive to SEDTL. Finding good cooperating teachers is part of a two-part strategy: building a strong relationship with participating districts, through which the university and district learn from each other’s approach to SEL; and providing training on SEDTL to cooperating teachers, as CRTWC has done in Sunnysvale School District.
- **Provide time for faculty for training and collaboration to integrate SEDTL practices effectively in their coursework.** SJSU’s integration of SEDTL throughout its program has developed over the course of a decade with CRTWC and would not have been possible were it not for the time that faculty took to participate in trainings, read, inspect their own syllabi and assignments, and collaborate with each other. This time and sustained attention required an internal change agent, CRTWC, to lead the way, organizing professional learning meetings for faculty to convene, and revise their work with an SEDTL lens. Integrating SEDTL into a preservice program requires time for the whole staff to develop a common language and commitment across the curriculum.

In what follows, we describe how this work has been brought alive at Lakewood Elementary School in Sunnysvale, one of SJSU’s partner districts, which also works with CRTWC on in-service development.

#### Resources for developing social and emotional learning in preservice programs include:

- Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child’s website (<http://crtwc.org/>) and its Teacher Educator Institute (<http://crtwc.org/2018-2019-teacher-educator-institute/>)
- Tisch College Initiative on Social-Emotional Learning and Civic Engagement at Tufts University (<https://tischcollege.tufts.edu/civic-studies/initiative-social-emotional-learning-and-civic-engagement>)
- CASEL’s 2017 report *To Reach the Students, Teach the Teachers: A National Scan of Teacher Preparation and Social & Emotional Learning* (<http://www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/SEL-TEd-Full-Report-for-CASEL-2017-02-14-R1.pdf>)

# Integrating Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning at Lakewood Elementary

## A Glimpse Inside Lakewood Elementary

### The Chillax Corner

Twenty kindergarten children shuffle into their brightly decorated classroom after recess. Most go straight to a rug area in the corner of the room and form a circle, while one boy, Marco, quietly settles himself at a small table in the corner of the room. Their teacher, Jennifer Concepcion, sits among her students and turns a stick in a bowl, which emits a calming ring. The children sit calmly and quietly for a minute, listening to the “singing bowl” until the sound fades. In the meantime, Marco is taking a few deep breaths. After a couple of minutes, he pushes in his chair and rejoins the class at the circle.

“Marco was being responsible. He told me he was not feeling well and asked if he could go to the Chillax Corner,” says Concepcion to her class. Marco had gotten upset during recess because he had a conflict with his classmates. Kindergarten students in Concepcion’s class know that when they are upset, they can use the Chillax Corner to calm down. The Chillax Corner is a calming area in the classroom with a table, a chair, and objects such as stress balls and fidget spinners that students can use to calm down and prepare to return to classroom activities in a safe way.

“Remember that we keep hands and feet to ourselves. We don’t want to be the reason why someone has to go to the calming corner,” Concepcion tells her students. She then begins a community circle activity in which children share how they helped others at recess.

The Chillax Corner is one of several strategies that Concepcion introduced at the beginning of the school year to develop students’ social and emotional needs. “These strategies help things go smoothly in my classroom,” she explains one afternoon as her students line up at the door.

She points out that Marco only needed to be in the Chillax Corner for a few minutes before he was ready to rejoin the class—which has not always been the case. “In the past, I used to pull students aside to discuss an issue, while trying to keep the rest of the classroom engaged,” she says. “Now students try to figure out things by themselves, which frees me up to focus on academic teaching.”

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### Collaborative projects

In a 5th-grade classroom nearby, 24 students are concluding a class project on different world regions. Students were divided into teams, and each team was assigned an article to read. The team worked together to decide the main idea of the article and most important details, which they later

presented to the class. These presentations were videotaped, and students watched themselves on video to assess their individual presentations. For this class, Allyson Guida, the classroom teacher, explains, they will assess their whole group's work:

Your job today is to make sure you finish self-assessing as a group. Remember we talked a lot about how we watched the video the first couple of times to just look at ourselves, right? And we watched ourselves present to think about what we can do better? [Today] when you're using the rubric, you want to be thinking of the whole group. Think of yourselves as a unit. Just because one person moved and had gestures doesn't mean you get a 5 [out of 5], right? ... Then you're going to have 5 minutes to write a promise or a commitment to yourself for what you're going to do next time when we present.

One student asks if it would be okay to continue to revise the group's PowerPoint slides. "Yes, absolutely," his teacher responds. "That's definitely a conversation I want you to have in your group." Opportunities to revise work are common in Guida's class.

After receiving a hand signal from their teacher, students quickly pick up their laptops and rubrics, find their groups of three, and settle into different corners of the room: some at desks, others huddled together on the carpet. For this particular activity, the groups were formed based on student choice and student ability; students chose the geographic region in which they were most interested, and from there Guida matched them based on reading ability and what she calls "time on task."

The room is soon abuzz with conversation, while some groups listen quietly to videos of their presentations on their laptops using earphones. Guida walks through the classroom initially, making sure each of the students has his or her rubric and helping direct a student who was absent the previous day.

Three boys bow their heads over laptops at a cluster of desks. "I probably got like a 3," one student tells his partner. "No, I think a 4," says another. "We demonstrated some knowledge, but we didn't demonstrate like, a lot of knowledge. I think it was in the middle." His partners agree. But, he adds, "We got a 4 on speaking and making eye contact with the audience."

When asked what happens if they do not get a good grade on their presentation, one student responds, "It's just for practice." Her partner adds, "We write it on a Post-it: we have to put what we should do next, and that will help us for the rest of the year ... as long as we learn from it."

In Guida's classroom, students have collaborative projects that culminate with whole-class presentations once a trimester. Given that these kinds of projects require students to be able to work in teams, Guida introduces specific SEL lessons to help students develop their relationship skills, and then reinforces what they learned by offering opportunities, such as these collaborative projects, for students to apply them in the classroom.

## School and District Context

Lakewood Elementary School is part of the Sunnyvale School District, a small, diverse school district in California's Bay Area. In the heart of Silicon Valley, a region with the highest median wage in the country and astronomical housing costs, Sunnyvale, which serves around 6,800 students in its eight elementary and two middle schools, has 35% of its students receive free and reduced-price lunch, and 31% are English language learners.<sup>44</sup>

Lakewood Elementary serves a population with a wider income disparity than other elementary schools in the district, ranging from many who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch to families with high incomes prevalent in Silicon Valley. Among its 440 students in grades k–5, 61% are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 45% are English language learners. The school is ethnically diverse, with students coming from a variety of religious, ethnic, and linguistic communities. The largest ethnic group is Latino/a, representing 33% of the school population.<sup>45</sup>

Lakewood is one of the district schools that receives targeted community services, such as the “grocery days” aimed at providing food on weekends for children who rely on the school for most of their meals. The school employs 22 teachers, along with part-time support staff shared with other schools in the district, such as a counselor, psychologist, and social worker.<sup>46</sup>

Lakewood's vision emphasizes preparing future citizens in real life and online who are capable of communicating effectively using today's technology. The school's focus is a combination of technology and emotional intelligence (EQ), defined as the ability to understand and manage one's own and others' emotions and use these emotions to guide decision-making.<sup>47</sup> Or, as the school often describes it, “technology and social smarts for the 21st century.”

In 2013, the Sunnyvale School District launched a [one-to-one technology initiative](#) to help provide access to technology for all students. The school's principal, Dr. Pamela Cheng, was excited about this opportunity, but also concerned about some of the negative effects that technology may have on children and youth. She wanted to find a way to adopt technology devices at school while utilizing the community's strengths and continuing to build on students' pro-social skills.

We needed [access to technology]; we knew that a lot of our kids didn't have that. But we also were finding out that when kids are given technology, it's not necessarily a positive thing, and the online world is really not necessarily very pro-social. So, we were thinking, “How can we leverage their EQ, or their social-emotional strengths, [to] fill in the needs?” If it was about knowing an audience and having a purpose, if it's about how to relate to each other, about communicating effectively, then if we brought that into technology use, that's the kind of thing that any parent would want for their student and any student who didn't have parental guidance with technology would need. What we would want for them is by the time they left our school, they had access to the technology—but they also had ways to think about how to use that technology for communication.

Over the last 4 years, Principal Cheng and her team built a vision based on the infusion of technology and EQ in which students learn how to use technology to communicate effectively and responsibly. “We see social-emotional skills and technology the way a dual immersion school sees two languages,” she explains.

Social-emotional learning has long been the passion of Cheng and several of Lakewood’s teachers, many of whom are graduates of SJSU and have participated in CRTWC cooperating teacher professional development. As described earlier in this report, SJSU’s elementary teaching program has an explicit focus on SEDTL and what is more commonly referred to in the district as SEL. Sunnyvale School District has a close relationship with SJSU, having hosted many of its teacher candidates over the years and having hired many of its graduates.

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Part of the goal of this relationship, explains Mike Gallagher, Deputy Superintendent, “is to have teachers trained in preservice, and have that teaching consistent with what they hear when they get into the staff room when they’re hired.”

The partnership, Gallagher believes, provides teachers with “consistent but non-redundant support,” and the focus on SEL has helped with retention at high-need schools.<sup>48</sup> These teachers recognize that many factors affect children outside of academics; if students do not have outlets to talk about their emotions or understand why they have those feelings, it will be hard for them to manage them. “It’s our job to teach them about feelings and how to best manage those emotions in positive and productive ways,” said a 5th-grade teacher.

Sunnyvale School District’s interest in SEL was deepened in 2010 when district staff began researching the types of universal supports that teachers could provide in the classroom to keep students engaged in learning while decreasing the number of students being sent to the office. Like many districts, Sunnyvale adopted the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program. PBIS is a framework for behavioral intervention that is intended to create a positive culture and steer school culture away from punitive measures. It explicitly defines positive student behaviors and provides students with tiered supports depending on their needs. To support a shift in behavior management, staff receive training in teaching social skills and conflict resolution as well as data-driven decision-making practices.<sup>49</sup>

According to Deputy Superintendent Gallagher, the district realized that those teachers who had received training related to the social and emotional development of students in their teacher education programs were more likely to know how to help students self-manage and be focused on learning. These teachers frequently came from SJSU, which was actively infusing SEL in its teacher preparation program. District staff realized that training in SEL, in addition to a behavior management framework such as PBIS, might be needed to support students, since PBIS sets expectations for positive behavior but does not necessarily teach students the skills, knowledge, and habits they need to meet these expectations.<sup>50</sup>

The importance of SEL to teachers at Lakewood is evident. Said a second-year teacher:

[The focus on SEL] is one of the reasons why I wanted to work at Lakewood. I think that’s true for a lot of the new teachers.... Something that attracted me to coming here was just the interest like at San Jose State, [where] we did a lot of background work on it.



The focus on SEL has been enriched in Sunnyvale, and particularly at Lakewood, through a partnership with CRTWC. In 2011, CRTWC was looking for a district partnership, since an important component of teacher education is student teaching. Sunnyvale took the opportunity to receive in-depth SEL training for its cooperating teachers, who mentor teacher candidates for a semester or full year. The official partnership with the district began organically as CRTWC trained cooperating teachers at SJSU in teaching with a social and emotional lens—developing a “playbook” of specific strategies that teachers can use in the classroom to support students. “[Teachers] started going back to their school sites, having their principals come in to observe them,” Nancy Markowitz, Executive Director of CRTWC, explains, “and then they start talking with the principals about what they’re doing, the professional development with us. And then the principal says, ‘Why don’t you share it with staff?’”

In addition to conducting training for cooperating teachers for 8 hours each year, in 2017–18 CRTWC also conducted trainings on the use of an SEL assessment, the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA), for all Lakewood teachers and representatives of each of Sunnyvale’s nine other schools. The DESSA, described in more depth later in this case study, is a strengths-based, nationally normed behavior rating scale designed to assess social and emotional competencies of children and youth in grades k–8. Given staff interest at Lakewood, in 2017–18 CRTWC additionally conducted three full-day, all-staff trainings on SEL at the school, with a dual focus on culturally responsive teaching to make sure diverse students—students of color, English language learners, immigrant students—are learning and succeeding academically within the classroom norms.<sup>51</sup>

## Key Components of SEL Implementation at Lakewood

This part of the case study examines how teachers, as well as school and district leaders, are cultivating students’ social, emotional, and academic development in the classroom. It also examines the training, support, and other structures the school has put in place to ensure that educators are supported in this challenging endeavor, including supporting the social and emotional needs of adults, and identifies lessons that are relevant for practitioners. While many aspects of Lakewood’s SEL implementation process are a work in progress, we identify the four key aspects that contribute to an authentic and sustainable SEL initiative as follows:

- 1. SEL is intentionally implemented through a variety of instructional approaches.** Teachers at Lakewood explicitly teach social and emotional competencies. They also infuse SEL practices in their academic teaching while providing a safe and supportive learning environment for students.
- 2. Teachers and administrators are co-leaders in developing and growing the school’s SEL program and practices.** Under the leadership of Lakewood’s principal and supported by a strong collaborative culture, the school has created structured opportunities for teachers to lead the implementation of SEL on campus.
- 3. Educators’ preparation and the development of their own social-emotional skills support SEL implementation.** Lakewood’s schoolwide professional development is aligned with the school’s focus on SEL, providing teachers ongoing opportunities during

the year to learn promising practices for themselves and their students. Cooperating teachers working with CRTWC have become teacher leaders as they deepen their practice through in-depth training.

4. **The school's structures and resources support the whole child.** Lakewood's focus on SEL is enhanced by the adoption of a positive behavior system and community partnerships with social and health service agencies that provide student services.

## 1. SEL is intentionally implemented through a variety of instructional approaches

### *Explicit teaching of social and emotional competencies*

In one of Lakewood's kindergarten classes, Aubrea Felch reads the class a book about a girl who did not know how to listen. After, the students discuss the story and talk about how becoming a better listener helped the main character. Students then practice their own active listening with a partner: taking turns when speaking, looking at their partner's face, and asking questions about what they heard. Felch introduced this lesson after realizing that students were not listening well when sharing with each other. "It helps them develop their language skills and also strengthens their ability to have meaningful conversations," she explains.

This example illustrates how social and emotional skills can be taught explicitly. CASEL recognizes explicit SEL skills instruction as one of the necessary approaches to support students' social and emotional development.<sup>52</sup> Teachers may use free-standing lessons that provide explicit, step-by-step instructions to teach social and emotional skills; these explicit lessons are age-appropriate and address topics such as labeling feelings, dealing with stress, and developing empathy.

The school has adopted CASEL's framework, which identifies five core social and emotional competencies that students must develop in the context of explicit instruction, supported by a supportive and caring school environment and strong family and community partnerships (see Figure 2).

Lakewood Elementary does not have a mandatory SEL curriculum, but instead allows each grade level to choose among a variety of SEL curricular resources, such as the teacher-created "Inside Out" curriculum; a prepackaged curriculum called Second Step; and lessons from a website affiliated with the district's SEL assessment, the DESSA. Teachers use the framework as a guide for their SEL work in the classroom, as a kindergarten teacher, Ms. K., explains:

I start with the most basic [competency], which is self-awareness: take care of me first. What am I feeling? Okay, got that, check. Next, how do I connect with other people? That's the relationship part, so [I need to teach how] I'm managing my emotions. That's when the Chillax Corner gets introduced. What's the next step? I will have to find a place to handle my emotions, what strategies I need to use to handle [them]. Once I've handled my emotions, how do I take it back and interact with people? That's when we teach relationships and being partners with people. Then after that it's making a decision. Now we're doing goal setting.

**Figure 2**  
**Social and Emotional Learning Competencies**



Source: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). (2017). Social and Emotional Learning Competencies. Reprinted with permission.

Felch and the other kindergarten teachers use a school-designed SEL curriculum based on the movie *Inside Out*. She introduces the five emotions (joy, sadness, fear, anger, and disgust) at the beginning of the school year and has conversations with students about the important messages that emotions have. “When we talk about emotions, we talk about sizes of emotions. [For example] if you get to be a 4 out of 5, you can use the Chillax Corner.” The teacher emphasizes how teaching these SEL lessons is helping students with academics because they learn tools to respond appropriately when they feel strong emotions. Once students are able to recognize their own emotions, they can use healthy coping strategies (such as naming what they feel or taking a few deep breaths) that decrease the intensity of the emotions and make it possible for them to return their focus to academic work instead of being preoccupied by difficult feelings.

Teachers have flexibility to decide when they will address each of these skills in the classroom and how they will adapt their explicit SEL instruction to meet the particular needs of students. In the 2017–18 school year, nine of the 21 teachers had set aside regular time for SEL lessons in their

classroom, and four more were new teachers (in their first or second year) working with a coach to integrate SEL lessons into their schedule. Ms. K. says teachers appreciate this flexibility, which shows the principal respects their professional judgment. She explains that she and her colleagues might move certain lessons in the scope and sequence of the curriculum and teach them earlier if they see students need those skills to be successful in the classroom:

Over the next 5 or 6 weeks this [set of competencies] is what we're going to be covering. Then you can look at your class. Maybe it seems that they're a little more proficient in one area, but they really need support in another area, and so you might move growth mindset up further, so that they can be successful, instead of waiting, like "Oh no, we have to stick to this. We'll get to it in a few weeks."

She points out that while she may move lessons around, she still generally follows a pacing guide and knows she is going to hit all these points eventually. Flexibility allows her to plan for what her kids need most urgently.

Concepcion is a graduate of SJSU's master's program in curriculum and instruction and a cooperating teacher taking part in the CRTWC's workshops on SEL. As the lead teacher for the k-1 team who helps develop the pacing guide and curriculum for these grades, Concepcion has brought many teaching practices to Lakewood that she learned at SJSU and in her work with CRTWC. She emphasizes that explicit instruction on SEL should be done during the first 6 weeks of school: "A lot of [direct instruction] is done in the first 6 weeks, which is why I'm really pushing to teach the brain now, teach the emotions ... because throughout the year you're just going to keep referring back to it." Most educators agree on how important the first 6 weeks of school are to establish expectations and routines in the classroom and lay the foundation for a productive year. Once the competencies have been explicitly taught at the beginning of the year, teachers can focus on infusing them during the day without spending significantly more instructional time.

Concepcion explains further: "We are trying to emphasize [SEL] is not a curriculum you'd pull out. It's something that you teach very explicitly, and then throughout the year you just have to pull from those little lessons." She says it is rare that more intense interventions are needed later in the year, although sometimes it happens. For example, the 5th-grade class recently had "drama" that teachers felt warranted lengthier lessons about dealing with feelings and how to listen to others. Outside of these particular cases, she stresses, "Usually social-emotional learning can just be something that's integrated throughout the day."

### ***Infusing SEL practices in the classroom***

In addition to the direct teaching of social and emotional skills, research indicates that opportunities for SEL should also be integrated with teaching practices, such as project-based or cooperative learning, and academic curriculum areas, such as language arts, mathematics, or science (examples are illustrated in Figure 3).<sup>53</sup> To support students' mastery of state standards, teachers should seek to develop the social and emotional skills in students that they will need in order to access classroom materials, engage in academic discourse, or persevere in solving problems. A recent report from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development at the Aspen Institute describes the need to facilitate the integration of social and emotional development with academic instruction, providing students opportunities to develop these skills as an integrated part of the day-to-day work in the classroom.<sup>54</sup>

**Figure 3**  
**Ways That Social-Emotional Learning Can Be Integrated Throughout the Day**



Many teachers at Lakewood have received training on how to infuse SEL in their teaching at SJSU or in professional development with CRTWC, and those who have not are learning from their colleagues. As described in the first part of this study, CRTWC believes in bringing this “SEL lens” into the ongoing school curriculum. Cooperating teachers are adopting and using CRTWC’s anchor competencies, comprehensive skills that need to be addressed by teachers and students during the first 6 weeks of school and built upon throughout the school year to build an effective learning environment and facilitate student academic success in content areas (see Figure 1).

Many teachers at Lakewood have received training on how to infuse SEL in their teaching at SJSU or in professional development with CRTWC, and those who have not are learning from their colleagues.

In her 5th-grade classroom, for example, Guida realized partway into the first semester that students were having trouble working in teams. Problems with teamwork were hindering their ability to engage in science activities, in which students were expected to build a structure together, as well as in English language arts, in which students were asked to summarize an article as a group. Guida got students ready for academic teamwork by helping them get to know each other during Morning Meetings and creating a sense of community through different team-building activities. She explains one Skill Builder, an exercise, game, or activity used to support cooperative learning,<sup>55</sup> that she used with her class:

They do a puzzle together that collects their individual interests. They have to figure out how the puzzle pieces fit together. Then, we talk about the symbolism of the puzzle, and how our individual-ness comes together as a whole. Sometimes their individual self gets in the way to find a compromise with the group, but they are learning.

Guida is also a graduate of SJSU’s teacher education program and a cooperating teacher at Lakewood Elementary. She places a high value on building trusting relationships in the classroom, the first anchor competency in CRTWC’s framework. She infuses SEL practices throughout the day and helps students build awareness when they are off-task by helping them identify the things that get in the way of learning. For example, she might ask students, “Why is it hard for you to refocus today? Is there something going on at home?” or “Is there something going on at school that is making it difficult?” Helping students develop this awareness about themselves and the things that hinder their ability to focus in class is key to developing students’ ownership over their own learning, especially after SEL competencies have been explicitly taught in the first 6 weeks of school.

In another class, 4th- and 5th-grade students are reading a book and discussing the plot with the teacher. One of the students suddenly raises a flag: He is keeping track of how long kids have been sitting (45 minutes). Kevin Davis, the classroom teacher, says, “Time for a break! That sounds like a good idea.” The teacher projects a video on the whiteboard, while students quickly get up. The video asks students to “think on their feet,” and they jog in place while shouting out answers to quiz questions. Once the activity is done, students celebrate with “We did it!” and go back to their seats right away.

These types of activities, called “brain breaks” or “energy boosters,” are short activities (1 to 5 minutes) that incorporate movement. Studies suggest that regular physical activity supports healthy child development by improving memory, concentration, and positive outlook. When teachers incorporate exercise and movement throughout the school day, students become less fidgety and are better able to focus on learning.

### Using Mindfulness to Lower Students’ Affective Filter

Guida is preparing her 5th-graders for a mathematics test. As students get ready, she has them practice deep breathing and saying positive statements. In a calming voice, she tells the class:

Remember that nerve inside your body might be quivering right now, you might have butterflies, but you’ve got this. You practiced yesterday. Take a deep breath in. Let it out. Take a deep breath in, let it out. Maybe shake out your hands. Maybe roll your shoulders, making sure there’s plenty of blood flowing from your body to your brain. Say, “You’ve got this, baby!”

“You’ve got this, baby!” the class echoes back. After getting the okay, they bow their heads over their test on decimals, and they begin their work.

Many teachers at Lakewood Elementary explicitly teach mindfulness, or “the ability to stay focused on one’s present experience with nonjudgmental awareness.”<sup>56</sup> Many mindfulness practices have been linked to improved cognitive outcomes, social and emotional skills, and well-being.<sup>57</sup> Lakewood does not follow a mindfulness curriculum, but many teachers have practiced and shared mindfulness techniques with trainers at CRTWC, who have included a Mindfulness Resource List in their SEDTL/CRT Anchor Competencies Schema.<sup>58</sup> Commonly used activities at Lakewood include deep breathing, a practice that anchors the attention on the breath, as well as the use of positive statements called “affirmations” that can improve performance under stress by encouraging positive self-talk.<sup>59</sup>

Mindfulness and SEL are distinct but complementary. Researchers have described SEL as using an outside-in approach with a focus on teaching skills, while mindfulness is said to work from the inside out, drawing on the premise that each person has the innate capacity for relationship-building qualities such as empathy and kindness.<sup>60</sup> For example, mindfulness practices can increase students’ self-awareness, which in turn allows them to better self-regulate and resolve conflicts under stress.

Guida explains that professional development with CRTWC helped her develop many of the strategies she uses in class, including those focused on mindfulness:

I learned a lot of things ... [such as] the actual acknowledging of the nerve in your body and the shakiness of it, and the breathing, and how it affects your physiology and how your body actually physically changes.... So that way, some of the stuff we do is grounded in science.

The class did not immediately warm to some of the mindfulness activities Guida uses in class.

Some of them would look at me like I was crazy. But they’re kind of starting to feel it now, and you can tell, as I try different mindfulness strategies, you can see certain kids really taking it more seriously than they did at the beginning of the year, which is kind of nice.

One way teachers help create buy-in with their students is by participating in the activities themselves. Alex Ha similarly teaches 5th-grade students simple relaxation exercises that they regularly practice before engaging in a stressful situation, such as an assessment or a difficult task. He says,

I've seen a lot of growth in my students. I ask students if they have tried the relaxation strategies, and a lot of kids share that they are using the strategies at home too. They tried the breathing activity and they felt better. We do these exercises at school, but it is also benefiting students at home.

That students are using these self-management skills beyond the classroom and transferring them to new situations and settings, such as home, is the ultimate goal of SEL—for students and adults to use these skills regularly in their daily lives.

In addition to infusing SEL throughout the day, teachers at Lakewood also tie social and emotional competencies to academic content. For example, in kindergarten, students are introduced to growth mindset, one of the anchor competencies in the SEDTL framework created by CRTWC. (See Figure 1.) Students explore the difference between having a growth mindset, the belief that one can succeed in most situations with hard work and persistence, versus a fixed mindset, or the belief that one's intelligence and abilities will not change. They then practice using positive statements such as "I can always improve" or "Mistakes help me learn," simple practices that in some circumstances have been shown to increase achievement.<sup>61</sup> (See Figure 4.) Teachers use these positive statements during academic lessons and remind students to apply them while they are working with their partners. Ms. K. explains how they do it:

We tied [SEL] in with the content that we're working on. In kindergarten ... the content is working with your math partner to sort objects. We'll start our math lesson and remind them about the [growth mindset] language that we've talked about, how to work with partners in a positive way, reminding them what to do when you run into something that's tough. Then praising that as we hear it with partners.

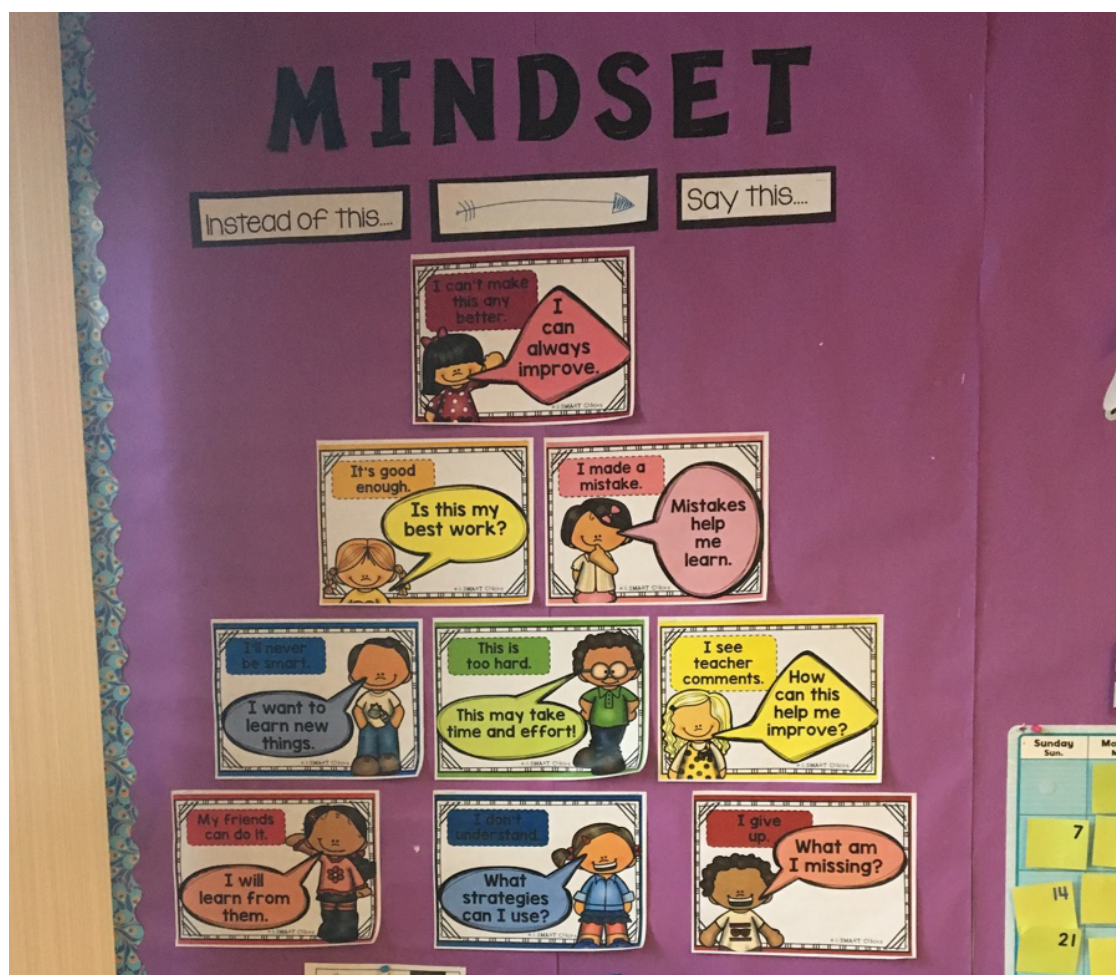
Once the activity is completed, teachers ask students to reflect on how they used these growth mindset statements during the partner work. This reflection is a key part of the learning process—it allows students to integrate this new learning with their existing knowledge and prepares them to apply these skills in new situations and settings. "Then after that partner activity, [we reflected] on what they were able to implement, and really making that explicit connection ... we talked about growth mindset here, then you applied it here," Ms. K. explains.

Although teachers encourage students to apply these skills during the day, they understand that students might need several opportunities to practice before these skills become habits. "Maybe today was tough and we forgot to apply it. We'll try it again tomorrow," concludes Ms. K.

In addition to infusing SEL throughout the day, teachers at Lakewood also tie social and emotional competencies to academic content.



**Figure 4**  
**Classroom Poster: Mindset**



Source: Photograph from Sunnysvale School District classroom. Printed with permission.

Teachers have started to notice the impact that explicitly teaching and infusing SEL in their instruction has on students. Guida describes the impact on one student in particular. “Last year I had a child that was very challenging. I really tried to take all the tools out of my SEL toolbox and use as much as I could.” Although it was a difficult process, Guida says it is paying off:

Last year I was able to try a lot of things that were successful. It just kind of validated everything that we’re doing in here, and it helped, too, because I think the staff was also aware of this challenging kid and seeing the change in his behavior from 2nd grade to 4th after being in my classroom for 3rd. It was like night and day. Sharing stories with the staff in the last year—not just me, but other teachers, too—about how it’s working, I think, gave some teachers some buy-in, which is really good.

The student Guida is referring to is doing better, although he still has his challenges. But she can now support his current teacher, for example by having a quick chat with him when he needs a break from his classroom.

## 2. Teachers and administrators collaboratively develop the school's SEL initiative

### *Teacher leadership*

At Lakewood, teachers' passion for SEL has been a catalyst for a schoolwide focus on developing students' social and emotional competencies, complementing the interests of the principal and district staff. Six of the 21 teachers at the school are graduates of SJSU's teacher preparation program and came to the school with a working understanding of SEL. Two of the school's current lead teachers are also cooperating teachers who receive ongoing SEL training from CRTWC.

Before Lakewood had a schoolwide focus on SEL, many of these teachers were already teaching social and emotional competencies and infusing SEL strategies in their classrooms. As teacher Concepcion explains:

We were all doing something in our classroom that was positive and really good for the students in relationship building. We just didn't have a universal language to say it. I was doing Inside Out [curriculum] and nobody knew it. It's something that should have been shared, but people thought that's just what Concepcion does.

Principal Cheng noticed the results that were coming from these teachers focusing on SEL in their own classrooms. She realized that many teachers at the school were already teaching SEL and building strong relationships with students through home visits, community circles, or simply intentionally greeting each student at the door, although at that point they were not using a formal curriculum except for Inside Out, the curriculum developed in-house. Every year students in 4th and 5th grade take the 40 Developmental Assets Survey from the Search Institute, which measures students' social and emotional competence and supports for SEL provided by educators, among other constructs. Results confirmed the deep connections between adults and students that the principal had observed on campus.

Cheng opened opportunities for teacher leaders to share their practices with other teachers, and certain strategies began to spread. For example, most teachers at the school now have a Chillax Corner. Many teach self-calming techniques or have Morning Meetings, a community-building class meeting at the start of the day in which students greet one another; participate in a brief, lively activity; and read a morning message from the teacher.<sup>62</sup> According to a kindergarten teacher, these practices have "snowballed" as teachers share with one another. Her colleague notes, "I think teachers are feeling a little more empowered to try new things because they finally realize that other teachers were trying new things but just weren't talking about it."

Some of this sharing has been facilitated by structured opportunities. One example is grade-level meetings: Teachers in some grade levels, especially kindergarten and 5th grade, meet regularly about SEL to share ideas about curriculum and student needs. All-staff meetings are another opportunity to share because each staff meeting begins with a teacher highlighting a successful practice in his or her classroom. Teachers follow up by sharing materials, such as pictures, and conversations about the shared practices continue into the lunchroom.

Another opportunity is the school's Teacher Learning Days—a schoolwide opportunity for all teachers to share strategies, resources, and materials that have had a great impact in their classrooms. It is also a chance for teachers to deepen their practice, collaborate with colleagues, and ask for tips before implementing something new. For example, a teacher who successfully

implemented the Chillax Corner shared this resource during the school's Teacher Learning Day 2 years ago and modeled for her colleagues when and how to use it effectively in the classroom to promote students' awareness of their own emotions and their self-management. At the beginning of the following school year, the principal made available all the necessary materials for teachers to create Chillax Corners in their own classrooms. Although adoption of this strategy was not mandatory for teachers, today it is present in most classrooms and has been adopted as a schoolwide practice.

Teacher leaders are also encouraged to mentor and support one another. Teachers who are struggling with a student's behavior can have a peer observe their classroom—a low-stakes way to receive feedback, often from a grade-level partner.

Teachers are encouraged to take on learning projects. For example, veteran teachers only complete a formal observation cycle with their principal every other year. In the year they are not evaluated, teachers at Lakewood have the opportunity to choose an alternative evaluation project, choosing a personal focal area. Several teachers have chosen to look at how certain social and emotional supports or practices impact students. In one such project, teachers piloted using an SEL assessment, the DESSA, before it was adopted schoolwide. They used the data to plan class meetings and lessons, then tracked the progress of certain students over the year and reflected on how the lessons may have affected students' social and emotional growth. These evaluation projects are shared during Teacher Learning Days.

Teacher leaders are also encouraged to mentor and support one another. One formal opportunity is through behavioral observations. Teachers who are struggling with a student's behavior can have a peer observe their classroom—a low-stakes way to receive feedback, often from a grade-level partner. The teacher conducting the observation often receives a substitute to cover his or her classroom in this time or uses a student teacher. "It's peer-to-peer coaching, and [teachers] really like that," says Cheng. She explains that in the past, "Having an additional perspective, a pair of eyes on the students who knew a little bit about the interventions that were put in place, was really helpful in helping us understand that student better."

### ***Principal leadership***

Principals play a critical role in creating safe and supportive environments for teachers, parents, and students.<sup>63</sup> When principals launch a new initiative, it is important that they bring their staff into the vision and engage them in making decisions about the school.<sup>64</sup>

Cheng has been the principal at the school for 7 years and is a strong advocate for SEL. A former instructional coach and teacher with the district, she took on this leadership role when the school was going through some transition: After having been a distinguished school, it was the first year the school was in program improvement. During Cheng's first year as a principal, the school's demographics changed when a parent participation open-enrollment school opened across the street, and some of the most actively involved parents moved their students out of Lakewood. Parent participation rates dropped nearly 15% below the district average, and test scores dropped, too.

One of the early adopters of SEL in the district, Cheng brought assessment tools and teacher training to her staff in order to support Lakewood’s schoolwide SEL focus and implementation. She believes that SEL provides students with the necessary skills to create a community of learners. “Unless you can build a real community, unless you can get risk-taking to be something safe and exciting and bonding, you really don’t get a lot of really good in-depth learning,” she explains.

Cheng is, according to several teachers, a “hands-on” principal who actively supports the school’s focus on SEL. “Our principal is willing to give us time in our classroom to do community building and explicit SEL instruction, whatever that may look like for the class,” comments one teacher. “It’s nice to have that wiggle room, because not all schools allow for it or find it important.” When asked about principal support, several teachers expressed their gratitude for Principal Cheng’s commitment to SEL and her complete support. “Every staff meeting, she shows something that someone has done. She comes around and highlights our SEL work. In all the time that I’ve been here, it’s been complete support.”

Cheng also provided teachers with research on the importance of SEL, which she studied while doing her doctorate. Concepcion says this was a turning point: “When people started hearing that it’s actually something that’s research-based, I think everyone was a little more open to an intervention. Then the district started to do more focus work with us, too.”

District leadership, in addition to principal leadership, can be an important factor in the success of schoolwide initiatives. Although the school, rather than the district, was the focus of this study, interviewees did note that district leadership is supportive of a focus on SEL. For example the district, along with foundation support, funds integrated services such as Acknowledge Alliance counseling; Project Cornerstone, a program focused on SEL; and coaching for new teachers through the Santa Cruz/Silicon Valley New Teacher Project that supports adult SEL.<sup>65</sup> These initiatives are described in a subsequent section.

### ***Collaborative culture***

Lakewood Elementary has a collaborative culture, which has supported an organic growth of shared SEL practices in classrooms. Cheng explains the need to nurture teachers’ commitment and sense of connection:

Number one [is] the foundation of a collaborative culture. Staff members have to feel like they’re all in the same boat, serving the community and willing to pitch in. Without that sense of collaboration and ability to work through difficulties, and a commitment to each other, then it’s very difficult.

Research shows that a collaborative culture matters tremendously for teacher retention, especially in schools with diverse student bodies, with many students from low-income families.<sup>66</sup> Aspects of teacher collaboration that matter include whether teachers have time available to work with their colleagues or an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.<sup>67</sup> These factors, in turn, affect student achievement.

Each grade level has a “lead” teacher who runs grade-level meetings and provides support to colleagues. Lead teachers, many of whom are cooperating teachers, have played a meaningful role in developing buy-in from their colleagues at Lakewood Elementary and in establishing a culture of learning about the school’s SEL implementation process. Since they have been implementing

SEL strategies in their classrooms, they are able to help other teachers problem solve when issues arise or provide additional resources when needed. Several teachers shared with us how much they valued being able to learn from each other and ask questions about the different SEL practices.

Ms. K. says:

I think there is a lot of learning from each other.... I feel like we can ask each other for help, especially in our grade-level teams. I think that's been really helpful. If there's something I'm not happy with I'm like, "Are you guys seeing this?" and they'll either say, "Yeah, I'm having that problem too," or have ideas for what we can do.

The school has also deliberately fostered a collaborative culture by building in time for staff to support one another. For example, Lakewood Elementary recently matched staff with "mental health buddies" to build what Cheng calls "networks of support within the staff," so that teachers feel connected and supported. Teachers are paired up with a teammate from a different grade level for the year. Before the start of staff meetings, the pairs walk around the school's track with their mental health buddy and have a short conversation and relax.

### **3. Educators receive training to develop their understanding of SEL**

#### *Professional development for cooperating teachers*

CRTWC has been offering professional development for cooperating teachers in Sunnyvale since 2011; thus far, they have trained 25 cooperating teachers in the Sunnyvale District and five cooperating teachers at Lakewood Elementary. The goal of these workshops is to strengthen cooperating teachers' ability to infuse SEL in their teaching in order to make them better mentors for the teacher candidates placed in their classrooms. "I've always seen working with the cooperating teachers as a critical part of the preservice, and that's also a way to develop teacher leaders in the schools," says Markowitz. "And that's what's been happening in our lab." An important benefit of the trainings for schools is that cooperating teachers share what they learn with their colleagues. "They're getting trained and going back to the staffs, and then they're becoming teacher leaders in [SEL]," says Sunnyvale's Deputy Superintendent Gallagher. He credits these workshops for the district's ability to deepen its focus on SEL.

The cooperating teacher workshops have many features that research suggests are important: They are content-focused, support collaboration in a job-embedded context, offer opportunities for reflection, and are of sustained duration.<sup>68</sup> Participants typically attend four 2-hour workshops per year during the school day, while student teachers are paid to cover their mentors' classroom duties as substitutes.

CRTWC starts workshops with an introductory activity that teachers can use in their own classrooms, such as a breathing exercise, and include both a main lesson and an opportunity to share practices teachers are using in their own classrooms. Lessons are connected to one of CRTWC's anchor competencies and provide some of the scientific background related to how people learn.

At one cooperating teacher workshop, teachers began the session as they traditionally did, by sharing their recent experiences implementing SEL. "Were you able to think about, plan, or teach an anchor competency or teacher move we discussed?" asked Wendy Thowdis, Assistant Director of

CRTWC. Eight teachers sat around a conference table in the CRTWC office at Lakewood Elementary. One participant was a coach supporting new teachers and early mathematics instruction, and the rest were cooperating teachers who were currently hosting teacher candidates.

The teachers had done some “homework” for this meeting, despite it being the last week before winter break, which is a busy time in schools. “I did a body scan,” said one 5th-grade teacher, referring to a mindfulness technique in which participants bring attention to various parts of the body. She noted that it was her first time trying out this strategy, which, along with other mindfulness activities, is focused on building students’ self-awareness and their self-management skills.

I noticed my kids are getting better at being mindful, or at least practicing it. They have more buy-in, although there is still some resistance from some of the kids. Some of the kids did share out that they were a little more relaxed, calmer.

A 1st-grade teacher noted that to help students buy into mindfulness exercises, she identifies “mindful managers” in her classroom. The mindful managers compliment kids who are doing a good job in the activity, and now the students are doing the activities on their own. “I try not to be the mindful cop; I try to do [the mindfulness activity] with them,” she explained. “We think of leadership as giving a presentation, or doing reading fluency out loud, but mindfulness is a way for them to be a leader.” “I do that too!” a kindergarten teacher chimed in. Her students now have her pause to make sure the whole class is ready.

The lesson for this workshop was focused on building trusting relationships, the first anchor competency. “One way to think about building trusting relationships is as building rapport,” Thowdis said. And to build this rapport, she explained, teachers should be aware of the negative biases they may have toward their students that could impede their relationships. She went on to describe the brain’s tendency toward “negativity bias,” through which we tend to ignore evidence of positive attributes if they are not part of a negative story we already believe. A handout for the workshop put it this way:

Building trusting relationships is a way of building rapport, and to build this rapport, teachers should be aware of the negative biases they may have toward their students that could impede their relationships.

As the students’ ally, the teacher has to be the voice that cues their brain’s activating system to pay attention to these new behaviors. Teachers need to *practice* catching students in the act of being self-directed learners or when they take intellectual risks.<sup>69</sup>

To identify negativity bias in their own lives, teachers were instructed to take a few minutes to map out various aspects of their own identity in an “Identity Chart,” an activity borrowed from the curriculum Facing History and Ourselves. Thowdis then led the group in a discussion of parts of their identity that might be perceived both negatively and positively. One teacher shared that as a

young woman, she was perceived as pushy, while she perceived herself as assertive. Another teacher described being labeled as “dumb” for having a learning disability, dyslexia, which now allows her to understand her students’ needs and abilities better.

“Do you see a way you can use this with your students?” Thowdis asked the group. One teacher explained that she had had success in teaching the idea of positive and negative narratives with the book *Giraffes Can’t Dance*, in which a giraffe is told by other animals he is a bad dancer and he believes them—but when he discovers another kind of music, he learns he has talent. She said this book resonated with her students, although a book with a similar theme had been too complex. Another teacher said she would try reading the story with a kindergartener in her class who believed he was a “bad” kid.

To conclude the workshop, the group watched and debriefed a video of an English language learner in mathematics class. The boy, Moises, clearly understands a lot of the mathematics in his textbook but struggles visibly to understand his teacher or explain his reasoning, and his teacher seems unsure about how to help him. When he asks about the state mathematics test, she tells him not to worry because it is “not important.” The group discussed the teacher’s impressions of the boy—how she may have underestimated his mathematics abilities, despite caring about him. “She might assume this child is not being helped at home, but he is, there’s just that language barrier. He had a positive narrative about himself until he got to school,” summarized one teacher.

They discussed what the teacher might have done differently. For example, one teacher pointed out she could “attend to class status issues” by finding ways to have the student’s Spanish-speaking classmates help him explain his reasoning, rather than putting him on the spot and then giving up on him. This would help build the student’s self-confidence and self-efficacy, part of self-awareness, as well as supporting class relationship skills such as teamwork.

The class concluded with a call to action. Participants would try out a “teacher move” described in class, do some reflection, and be ready to share with the group the next month, starting small but implementing the new practice with fidelity. At another cooperating teacher workshop, Markowitz acknowledged the difficulty for new teachers to focus on relationship building: “My experience is for new teachers coming in, it’s very hard to approach this area [of relationship building]. There’s a tendency to back off, even for experienced teachers.”

Cooperating teachers say that these workshops have helped improve their practice—both through the opportunity to share strategies with one another and through the opportunity to reflect on their own practice. According to one teacher, “I learned a lot of things, like different strategies other teachers are doing ... [and] the way some of the stuff we do is grounded in science.” Although she had studied SEL in her master’s program at SJSU, she explained:

In school it was very theoretical. Then when you get in a classroom, you’re like, “Okay, how am I supposed to do all this stuff as a new teacher?” So it’s nice to see just little things you can take away and do.

This teacher has now mentored several student teachers, one of whom is currently employed in the district.

### ***Schoolwide professional development***

In 2017–18, with the launch of the school’s Tech EQ vision, Lakewood Elementary’s principal arranged to have CRTWC provide SEL training for all teachers during three of the school’s professional development days, in addition to the 3 half days devoted to training on assessing students’ social and emotional competence. These trainings provide teachers with an opportunity to learn specific strategies to infuse SEL into their teaching. Formal training on SEL had been missing from Lakewood’s previous work, says Concepcion.

There’s so much training for teachers to use tech and use it meaningfully. Now we’re at that point where we go present our school to parents outside of our community, and they’re asking us, “What’s the social-emotional learning part?” We try to give examples, but we don’t have the academic words or the research to really back it up, even though we know we’re doing something different and something really great at our school. We just didn’t have the terms or ... a formal training for it.

### ***Training on SEDTL anchor competencies***

Partnering with CRTWC for whole-staff training seemed to be a natural next step to deepen staff understanding of SEL. The first training was an introduction to CRTWC’s framework for SEDTL, providing teachers with an overview of CASEL’s five social and emotional competencies and what it means to teach in a culturally responsive way. (See Figure 1.) The subsequent trainings got deeper into CRTWC’s anchor competencies. Trainings are similar to those attended by cooperating teachers but provide more context, since they are targeted at teachers with less prior knowledge about SEL.

In the midwinter training, the focal competency was growth mindset, the belief that one can improve with hard work over time, a mindset that requires self-awareness. Thowdis focused on articulating narratives that run counter to the negative beliefs students or teachers may have about themselves or others, similar to the work being done with cooperating teachers. For example, teachers identified common social narratives we have about students, such as girls not being good at mathematics.

To start the workshop, teachers watched the video *The Bear That Wasn’t*, the retelling of a picture book about a bear that wakes up from hibernation to find himself in a factory.<sup>70</sup> The people he meets assume that he is a worker, not a bear—“just a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat.” Despite the bear’s insistence that he is, indeed, a bear, the authorities do not listen to him, and they insist he get back to work. The bear nearly stops believing the truth—that he is a bear—until he finds himself once again in his natural habitat.

The group discussed the narratives and counternarratives present in the story. Thowdis explained, “The bear starts doubting who he is.... But his natural instincts kick in and he is able to reiterate who he is.” Then, Thowdis encouraged the group to think about how this story might relate to students. “What if you have a child in your class and she presents to you as not being able to do something?” she asked, adding, “Students come to your class with these narratives that hold them back.”



After this activity, teachers created an identity chart of themselves and discussed the dominant narratives in American culture. One of the teachers shared:

I am a positive person. The dominant narrative could be that I am naive, unrealistic, that I have my head in the sand. A positive counternarrative would be that I am hopeful, that it takes a lot of strength to focus on the positive.

Thowdis next asked teachers to identify the social and emotional competencies listed on their assessment of students' SEL that would be needed for students to recognize dominant narratives and create counternarratives. The group identified optimistic thinking to see the positive, self-awareness to explore personal narratives, and social awareness to identify dominant narratives in our culture.

These narratives relate to growth mindset because students need to believe in themselves before they will believe that their effort matters, Thowdis explained.

Before you promote growth mindset, you need to think about the narratives that your students bring. A lot of it is the preconceptions that we have about students. "You can do this" [and] "Effort makes you better" ... might not be enough [encouragement]. You need to know the narratives.

CRTWC's trainings also incorporate time for teachers to discuss the challenges they encounter and how they are finding resources for their classrooms. The training closes with a call to action in which grade-level teams commit to implement one strategy in the following weeks.

#### ***Training on SEL assessment***

In addition to training on how to infuse SEL into the classroom, CRTWC also stepped in to provide Lakewood with whole-staff training on the use of an SEL assessment, the DESSA, a strengths-based, nationally normed behavior rating scale designed to assess social and emotional competencies of children and youth in grades k–8.

The district felt the need to find additional measurement tools that were aligned with CASEL's core competencies to bring more coherence to the district's SEL initiative.

Sunnyvale School District started piloting the DESSA during the 2016–17 school year, when three district cooperating teachers who worked with CRTWC started using the assessment. During the 2017–18 school year, two teachers from each school piloted administration of the DESSA-mini, which consists of eight items and can be administered in 1 minute per student to all students in the classroom. The district had previously been using the Developmental Assets Survey from the Search Institute to assess strengths in the community and support students' resilience. However, Deputy Superintendent Gallagher said the district felt the need to find additional measurement tools that were aligned with CASEL's core competencies to bring more coherence to the district's SEL initiative.

The DESSA measures eight competencies, which include the CASEL five: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, as well as goal-directed behavior, personal responsibility, and optimistic thinking. For each student, teachers are asked to note whether, in the last 4 weeks, students never, rarely, occasionally, frequently, or very frequently did certain things. For example, did the student

- Resolve a disagreement? (social awareness)
- Seek advice? (responsible decision-making)
- Compliment or congratulate someone? (relationship skills)
- Ask questions to clarify what he/she did not understand? (self-awareness)
- Stay calm in the face of a challenge? (self-management)<sup>71</sup>

Students who score low on the DESSA-mini are considered at risk for exhibiting or developing social-emotional problems, and they are described as in need of instruction. Aperture Education, the DESSA vendor, recommends administration of the full DESSA (72 items) when students' scores fall in the "need for instruction" range. In order to help teachers address the needs identified by the assessment tool, the DESSA comes with access to a website called Evo SEL, which provides intervention strategies and lesson samples from SEL programs such as Open Circle and Second Step. Once teachers have identified the specific competencies that students need to develop further, they can select resources based on content and grade level.

Two cooperating teachers from Lakewood Elementary participated in the initial DESSA pilot. At the end of the pilot, they shared how it had supported their classroom climate and the changes they observed in their students. After this session, the principal asked her staff if they wanted to do the DESSA schoolwide and the response was unanimously "yes."

In 2017–18, Lakewood Elementary teachers administered the DESSA-mini three times for all students, administered the full DESSA as needed, and taught a few lessons from the Evo SEL platform. In addition, the school's SEL professional development days, provided by CRTWC, also include training on DESSA, with dedicated time to share successes, ask questions, and discuss challenges.

Several Lakewood Elementary teachers reported finding it helpful to look at students from this social and emotional lens and were pleased to see growth between the first and second administration of the assessment. Teachers particularly liked that the process of reflecting on each child made them pay more attention to their students' social and emotional needs. For example, one noted that it was a good reminder to observe her students' social dynamics, which she would not have otherwise thought about; others said it prompted them to try out lessons on SEL. Still others said that it gave them a common language with which to discuss social and emotional competencies with their students.

### ***Coaching***

Although the school is using a significant amount of its professional development time for SEL, Principal Cheng acknowledges that formal trainings are not sufficient to do the kind of deep learning that SEL requires, so she supplements it with coaching support. Coaching is shown to be an important part of effective professional development. In a review of 35 high-quality models

of professional development, for example, coaching was included in at least 30.<sup>72</sup> Coaching is particularly important for sustaining the effects of initial professional development and ensuring that new programs are implemented with fidelity.<sup>73</sup>

Lakewood Elementary has two instructional coaches who support teachers across the different grades. Both are employed by Sunnyvale School District and work at multiple elementary schools in the district; one is focused primarily on induction for new teachers, while the other is focused on early mathematics. In addition to helping with whole-class instruction, coaches help teachers with students who are struggling academically, socially, or emotionally. Coaches are not required to have background on SEL when hired, but those who support new teachers in induction work with the Santa Cruz/Silicon Valley New Teacher Project, in which coaching is focused on getting teachers to be introspective about how their own personal experiences and competence affects their teaching, especially their ability to be compassionate and focus on students' strengths.<sup>74</sup>

Cheng explains that Lakewood coaching support is connected to whole-school initiatives, and coaches use student-level assessments, such as the DESSA, to identify areas of coaching support. Coaching makes it more likely that teachers will continue learning from professional development (PD) sessions, one coach explains, by providing a kind of accountability. After a half-day PD session, some teachers might try out a new strategy, but without follow-through they are not sure what to do. "If there's consistent follow-through from the professional development, they pick it up a lot more."

For example, after CRTWC's professional development on SEL and the DESSA, coaches help teachers use data from the SEL assessment to address social and emotional needs in their classes. The coaches help teachers choose lessons based on students' areas of need, and they sometimes model lessons in the classroom to show how teachers can "make it fluid."

Coaches sometimes work on SEL with teachers even when their main focus is more traditional academic instruction. "It is just a part of every conversation [related to classroom observation]," said one teacher. "You can't have a conversation about a child's academic progress without SEL as part of the conversation." The mathematics coach adds, "A lot of the work I've done this year, in particular with a couple of new teachers, is just stepping back and not jumping right into mathematics because some of the foundational stuff in the classroom wasn't set yet." She says this is especially true for teachers accustomed to more traditional instruction, with mostly whole-class, teacher-directed lessons. The coach has worked with these educators to teach cooperative learning skills and make both teachers and students more comfortable with making mistakes. She has also shared mindfulness activities she learned from CRTWC in order to reduce students' (and teachers') anxiety about learning mathematics.

It helps that Lakewood's coaches already believe in the importance of SEL in the classroom. One longtime coach has learned about SEL from trainings, such as those provided by the Santa Cruz/Silicon Valley New Teacher Project. "Because I have a lot of knowledge around SEL, I tend to structure questions to help guide my teachers and often get them to think about the social-emotional impact of what is happening," she explains. As SEL practices such as mindfulness become more common across Lakewood Elementary, teachers have even asked coaches to help them learn these strategies.

The biggest concern that teachers feel when it comes to integrating SEL in their classroom, coaches report, is a lack of time. One coach says she tries to counteract that concern by saying

It's not another thing, it's not another curriculum. It can be throughout your entire day. It's how we talk to students, how we present information, how we allow students to think, how we allow students to work and trying to get them to start.

The coach also notes that teachers can be afraid to start something new since they lack direction and feel vulnerable. This concern with trying something new is reduced at Lakewood because teachers can observe their coworkers and get ideas from them, says a coach familiar with the school, “whereas at other school sites it's much more individualized within the classroom because they don't know who to turn to.”

“It's not another thing, it's not another curriculum. It can be throughout your entire day. It's how we talk to students, how we present information.”

### ***Attention to the adults' social and emotional competencies***

Educators model social and emotional skills, intentionally or not, and teachers' social and emotional competence shapes the learning experience of their students.<sup>75</sup> Teachers navigate stressful situations every day—over 59% of teachers recently surveyed reported being under great stress, up from 35% in 1985—and students learn from their teachers how to manage frustration or deal with conflict. Supporting educators in dealing with that stress can lead to a more positive classroom environment.<sup>76</sup> One of the teachers at Lakewood Elementary shared the influential role that teachers have as models for their students:

It's wonderful to talk about the different emotions, but if you model every single day how to treat others with kindness, I think that is the most important lesson for the kids. I can see that in the community, how I carry myself becomes contagious, and the whole class buys into it.

Fostering SEL can be difficult, especially for new teachers who are learning for the first time to manage a classroom and implement a curriculum. Sunnyvale's coaches, including the induction coaches who work intensively with new teachers, pay attention to the social and emotional needs of the teachers themselves.

Shana Riehl, a longtime coach in Sunnyvale, says that when entering a new classroom,

One of the first things is ... I'm trying to figure out where [does the teacher] come from in terms of their own SEL skills. If their SEL skills are somewhat low, then trying to help build them and recognizing their own emotions and how they're reacting to their own emotions and how they can do that. If that isn't in place, I think it's harder to teach kids those skills.

For example, she says, teachers sometimes believe that students' negative behavior is personally directed at them.

I've had several teachers that [were] taking the behavior that the student is doing very personally, as a personal attack on them. And I've tried to have a conversation with the teacher to recognize that it's not about the behaviors that the student is showing, [it's] about the student.

As part of her coaching, she tries to develop teachers' self-awareness and help them recognize the various reasons for the student's behavior, encouraging teachers not to take student behavior personally. Ms. F., the mathematics coach, says that self-awareness is where she starts with some teachers, too, especially when they blame students for not understanding academic content. Teachers are often defensive, she explains, because they are asked to do so much. She tries to steer these teachers toward reflecting on their own practice and thinking about what they can change in their own teaching methods to enable student learning.

Teachers' social and emotional competence is also important when it comes to interaction among adults. When the school launched its Tech EQ vision this year, Principal Cheng wanted to explore what would happen if adult communication at Lakewood reflected the behaviors they were trying to develop in students. Faculty worked together to create guidelines for their own communication and established agreements about appropriate ways to respond to each other in case of conflict (see Appendix C). Cheng shares this document with both teaching and support staff and uses it to facilitate difficult conversations between staff members. She recognizes the benefits of establishing these shared agreements:

I do think that's made a difference in the climate and the culture of the staff. [You] create the kind of space you would want to work in, but then you have to take ownership of it and grow it in the moments of conflict. We need to go back and have those conversations with each other.

#### **4. School structures and resources support the whole child**

##### ***Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports***

Lakewood Elementary, like most schools in the district, implements Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a preventive behavior management system that focuses on identifying, acknowledging, and encouraging desired positive student behaviors. Schools that adopt PBIS generally establish clear expectations for behaviors that are taught, modeled, and reinforced by all staff. It complements the teaching and development of social and emotional competencies, which are needed for students be able to meet the behavioral expectations outlined under PBIS.<sup>77</sup>

For Cheng, PBIS provides the structure to identify how rules and expectations are taught across the school.

I think of PBIS as the skeletal system. It is like a structure [with] check boxes. Do we all have the same rules? Does everyone know the rules? Are we explicitly teaching them in all the different areas? Do we have a way of tracking the students who aren't following the rules for follow-up?

SEL, Cheng explains, is a lens for teachers to understand the reasons behind students' challenging behaviors and particular needs that goes beyond PBIS.

Social-emotional learning goes deeper [than PBIS] and is really in the classroom by the teacher.... Not only do you have clear rules and expectations, not only do you explicitly teach those routines and rules and expectations, but when a student has a hard time with it, you have a way of trying to understand why. Is it a skill deficit? Is it a hard day? Is it background that makes it particularly challenging? What is it and how can you respond appropriately for the kids in the class? ... [SEL] is a way of helping teachers reframe discipline.

The PBIS team at Lakewood Elementary is formed by teachers from each grade level, two coaches, the behavior specialist, the school psychologist, and the principal. Two of the team's teachers are also cooperating teachers being trained by CRTWC. The team meets once a month to discuss and analyze referral data and make schoolwide decisions based on the identified needs. They think about the social and emotional skills that might contribute to behavior problems, and the areas in which universal interventions might be warranted, says Guida.

Any time we have some kind of problem as a school we always look at it from an SEL lens. What can we do as a school to help support? What can we do at a classroom level to help support? We always try to target grade levels, too, if there's some kind of patterns in the data that we're seeing.

For example, the PBIS team noticed that 1st-graders were getting a lot of referrals during playground time. Concepcion, one of Lakewood's cooperating teachers and the lead for the PBIS team, explains the problem and its potential cause.

This is the first time the 1st-graders were able to play on the big playground with the other kids. They didn't know how to handle everything that was happening and what words to use so they would just hit, or they would push, because that was how they would get people's attention. So we realized, "Oh, we need to teach them how to say 'stop' or 'I don't like that.'"

To address the problem, the PBIS team and 1st-grade teachers decided to teach explicit lessons about how to problem solve during recess. The principal visited the 1st-grade class and role-played playground scenarios with them. Referrals subsequently decreased, teachers say.

The PBIS team also supports teachers who have individual students with challenging behaviors. Certain experienced teachers, such as the two cooperating teachers or the resource specialist, are available to do classroom observations when teachers request it. These peer teachers observe the student(s) and provide feedback to the classroom teacher. Concepcion values this opportunity to receive feedback from a colleague, instead of the coach or the administrator. "It's nice to have a peer say, 'Oh, I also see that this student is having a hard time focusing and these are some suggestions I have for you.'" If students are assessed for special education, the observing teachers also attend students' Individualized Education Plan meetings to support the classroom teacher and offer another perspective.

Data suggest that this approach may be working. Lakewood had low levels of suspension in 2016–17, with 1.7% of students suspended and none of these students receiving multiple suspensions—slightly lower than the district average despite having more students of color and more students from low-income families, who tend to be suspended at disproportionate rates. The number has declined for the past 2 years. Neither the school nor the district have had any expulsions.<sup>78</sup>

### *Integrated services*

According to CASEL’s framework (see Figure 2), SEL initiatives are most successful when coordinated across classrooms, schools, homes and communities, and the district. Integrated student supports can address out-of-school barriers to learning through partnerships with social and health service agencies and providers, usually coordinated by a dedicated professional staff member. Often called wraparound services, they link schools to a range of academic, health, and social services. When done well, integrated services can improve students’ attendance, academic achievement, and behavior.<sup>79</sup>

Sunnyvale School District contracts with a handful of community-based organizations to provide supplemental services to students and staff and promote their well-being. An example of this is Project Cornerstone—a partnership between the district and the regional YMCA. As part of the in-school, volunteer-based program focused on SEL, parent volunteers are trained in the “developmental assets” model for positive youth development<sup>80</sup> and come into classes to teach lessons on character through read-alouds. The program is intended to give students a common language related to SEL, as well as serving as a vehicle for student engagement. The parent workshops and staff training additionally support adults in developing better relationships with students and the school community.

Cheng says that the Project Cornerstone lessons on developmental assets are “some of the meat on the bones” of Lakewood Elementary’s approach to youth development and SEL, which is then built on further by teachers.

It starts to get at explicitly teaching things and explicitly teaching vocabulary to go with those expectations. The stories [are] about why [and how to develop SEL skills] so the kids kind of buy in and can have a sense of how to do it.

This is also a way to involve parents and have them be part of the school’s approach to SEL.

Project Cornerstone also provided the first opportunity for Sunnyvale School District to measure the social and emotional development of its students through its Developmental Assets Survey, designed by the Search Institute. The assessment, funded by the Santa Clara County Office of Education, was administered to all 4th- and 5th-grade students starting in the 2011–12 school year. According to Deputy Superintendent Gallagher, school leaders “have really valued the Project Cornerstone data and have used that to develop staff development around what are the assets in the community.” For example, school-level data helped leaders choose the new direction for Lakewood after the opening of the district’s choice schools. According to Cheng,

In looking at the challenges of our test scores and being in program improvement, and in looking at the Assets surveys, our needs were glaring. But then we looked at their strengths.... What we noticed were adult role models, caring, achievement, motivation was right at the same [level]: Parents cared about their kids. So we thought ... how can we build on this?

Their decision was to develop their focus on SEL.

Sunnyvale School District also partners with the Community Health Awareness Council (CHAC), a local community group that provides individual and group counseling to students with high needs and to teachers responding to school-related or personal crises. “We contribute a little bit and we get a lot in service” from CHAC, says Gallagher. “Even during the recession we said, ‘Hey, for a small investment we can get great service for our kids.’” He explains that the counselors are an important component to supporting SEL because they directly address the social and emotional needs of students.

At Lakewood, the Kaiser Permanente Medical Foundation funds CHAC interns to provide counseling for students. One of these interns co-developed the “Inside Out” SEL curriculum with a local teacher that is now used by many teachers at the school. Teachers are all aware of the services provided by the counselors, whom they meet at a beginning-of-the-year meeting at which all support staff are introduced. Guida explains that the interns are an important asset at her school. “If a teacher has a concern about a kid, the interns offer support and then the instructional coaches follow it. It’s nice to have CHAC. I mean, CHAC is huge.” There are not enough services available, however, Guida notes. “We definitely need more counseling, for sure.... We aren’t meeting the needs of all of our kids.”

### **Next Steps for Lakewood**

There is a lot of promising work happening within Lakewood, especially when it comes to the integration of SEL in day-to-day teaching. The school has made an impressive commitment to meeting the needs of the whole child by developing teachers’ capacity to support their students. But both the school’s leadership and teachers say that they still have a lot of work to do. Principal Cheng notes:

It’s a work in progress.... All we know is the pieces we have in place. We have a collaborative staff community that recognizes the importance of social-emotional learning, has decided to invest time in learning how to do this, and we happen to have a community connection that has some expertise in the area, so we said, “Okay, bring it on.” We’re going to see what we can learn together through it because it’s the direction we want to go. We’re going to figure it out as we go this year to see if we can deepen our practices and align them. That’s where we are.... I don’t know that it’s all there, ... but a lot of it is, and we’re building it as we go.

### **Building strong SEL practices schoolwide**

One area the school is working on is ensuring that strong SEL practices are being used in every classroom across the school. At the moment, a lot of the school’s focus on SEL is driven by the principal and a group of teacher leaders who have built a strong foundation in their grade-level teams. However, their expertise has permeated into some grade levels more than others. Certain practices, such as having a Chillax Corner or administering the DESSA, are used schoolwide, but others, such as having Morning Meetings or teaching mindfulness, are catching on but not yet universal, with about half of teachers setting aside regular class time for SEL lessons.



Getting the whole faculty on the same page is challenging, given turnover. Lakewood Elementary has a relatively stable staff for a low-income, Title I school, but several teachers who pioneered SEL strategies have left in the past few years.

Lakewood’s approach has thus far been to build teacher buy-in to SEL first rather than mandating certain practices from the top. Precious professional development time is spent giving teachers information and resources, but this is done without always having a firm requirement that the strategies be used in class. A lead teacher explains this choice:

We had discussions about that: Should we have a focus competency, just so that we can make sure everyone is covering it? I feel if something is forced, people don’t want to do it. That was a debate that we’ve had as a deciding group, to see about that part of it. [We decided] no, it’s probably not the best approach.

Teachers appreciate that practices are not mandated, says Ms. K., because it shows that leadership trusts her professional judgment.

The downside of a flexible implementation strategy is that it can feel haphazard at times, explains one teacher, especially to those with less training who are looking for structure. “That’s what a lot of teachers would say: ‘I don’t even know where to start. I know I have to do it, but where do I start?’” Having a schoolwide curriculum could increase continuity within and across grade levels. It might also ensure that all competencies are taught comprehensively; at present, much of the focus is on self-awareness and self-management, while less time appears to be spent on social-awareness and relationship skills. The school is looking to provide these teachers with tools, through their whole-staff professional learning time and coaching in particular. Yet this is a process that will take time.

### **Professional development that meets all staff’s needs**

Research shows that effective professional development meets many criteria: It is content focused, incorporates active learning, supports collaboration in job-embedded contexts, uses modeling of effective practice, includes coaching and expert support, offers opportunity for feedback and reflection, and is of sustained duration.<sup>81</sup> In a school with limited time and resources, it can be hard to do all of these things. Lakewood Elementary and CRTWC are still trying to find a balance of how to provide professional development to the whole staff that provides a common language and conceptual framework but is specific enough to satisfy the diverse needs of the staff with varying exposure and experience with SEL.

Lakewood Elementary and CRTWC are still trying to find a balance of how to provide professional development to the whole staff that provides a common language and conceptual framework but is specific enough to satisfy the staff’s diverse needs.

The concept of 3-day sessions on SEDTL for the whole staff was originally built on the idea that the school needed a common framework for teaching SEL. Concepcion says, “One thing that we found challenging in a lot of our meetings was we were all talking about the same thing but didn’t realize it because we weren’t naming it the same thing.” CRTWC’s anchor competencies, now familiar to the cooperating teachers, would serve as the common language among the staff. These anchor competencies are complex, however, and hard to cover in a 3-day session, especially since they overlap but are not exactly the same as the CASEL or DESSA competencies. Both Lakewood teachers and CRTWC trainers found it a challenge to provide a training that would sufficiently characterize SEL while still providing enough concrete detail for teachers. According to Principal Cheng:

There’s a sense of urgency that is there in this kind of context [of all-staff, midyear professional development] that’s very challenging and difficult to address, that’s not necessarily there when you have voluntary workshops.... That’s something that I think any partnership between schools and universities or any professional development provider will have to figure out how to negotiate, depending on the culture of the school, the range of skill and proficiency across the different staff, the personalities of the staff, and the way that staff works.

Some teachers expressed the desire for more concrete professional development, while others who have more experience want time to do their own individualized planning. Concepcion describes this tension and the need for differentiation in professional learning for those who are ready to infuse SEL into all that they do while others want help with specific lessons:

We have this kind of dynamic on the staff right now that wants a lot of structure and they want something like Second Step that has this lesson, next lesson, next lesson. And then we have the [teachers] that are like, “No, SEL is actually just getting to know your kids really well and you’re basically developing your own curriculum based on all the things that you’re learning.” ... So we’re trying to get everyone on the same page, but it’s very hard. We want the staff to develop a lens, but we also realized that to develop a lens, it takes a long time, and it can’t be done with just three PDs.

For this reason, professional learning on SEL is considered an ongoing need at Lakewood. In the years that follow, professional development may take the form of more all-staff training, perhaps with cooperating teachers playing a larger role in their facilitation as is happening at a neighboring school in the district. Professional learning might also take other forms, such as focused staff planning time, lesson modeling and co-teaching, coaching and mentoring, or differentiated training sessions. Another area for improvement will be making sure that SEL is implemented schoolwide, from the classroom to the playground. That will mean including support staff and community groups, suggests one teacher, including the district behaviorists and school counselors provided through CHAC.

## Using assessment to inform instruction

Teachers at Lakewood Elementary are still learning to use the DESSA, and at the time of writing most had not integrated the use of assessment data into their lesson planning. Teachers are still figuring out how to use the data appropriately. Some are using it mainly to teach small groups of students struggling with a particular skill, while a few are using the data for whole-group lessons, which one coach suggests might be a better starting place for most teachers.

I think as a classroom teacher, universal would be where I'd want to start, because I know that it would benefit all of my students. And then, as I'm progressing in starting to get to know my students, then really looking how can I differentiate because I see these needs.

Part of the challenge at Lakewood Elementary is that SEL curriculum is not uniformly used throughout the school, so schoolwide DESSA trainings are more difficult to connect to instruction. Some grade levels are using the DESSA to inform how they conduct follow-up lessons from their grade-level curriculum, while others are pulling individual lessons from the Evo SEL website. Although teachers were excited about the Evo SEL platform and having resources immediately available, they expressed concern about finding time for implementation:

How do we give a lesson that takes 45 minutes? When is it supposed to happen? I don't think there is a grade in this school that isn't crunched for time every single day. I am struggling with figuring out when and how we fit these lessons [in].

In addition to using the DESSA to inform instruction, there are also opportunities for Lakewood to integrate the assessment data into its PBIS data analysis and individual behavior plans for students. This will require a greater understanding of the DESSA on the part of the PBIS team but could make the data more useful and purposeful.

Teachers also expressed some doubts about the usefulness of the assessment in providing new information about students they knew well and wondered whether the assessment was picking up concerns they had noticed, such as anxiety. Upper elementary teachers, in particular, are interested in an SEL assessment that their students could take themselves. The kindergarten teachers, on the other hand, had questions about the assessment appropriateness for the school's youngest children, since 5-year-olds have typically not yet mastered certain social and emotional competencies that are assessed. The school's principal and staff have committed to continue to monitor these concerns and the assessments benefits as they continue to use the assessment this and next year.

## Findings and Conclusions

At Lakewood Elementary, SEL is not confined to a program or a weekly lesson but is viewed as a key pillar of the school's mission. Teachers and leaders understand that SEL should be integrated into every aspect of the school, from explicit classroom instruction and infusion into academic content to school climate and culture. Lakewood's leaders know, however, that teachers come into the profession with different levels of acceptance and understanding of SEL, and that the development of educators' social and emotional competence is an ongoing process that takes time. Lakewood has striven to ensure that teachers feel empowered to learn at their own pace and direct their own learning while having a strong commitment to support students' needs. Teachers continue to grow their SEL practices as they collaborate, learn from each other, and use SEL data to make instructional decisions, with the ultimate goal of nurturing students' social, emotional, and academic learning.

Teachers come into the profession with different levels of acceptance and understanding of SEL, and the development of educators' social and emotional competence is an ongoing process that takes time.

This example of how one school, with the support of a university, is supporting SEL offers several lessons, including how to:

- **Integrate SEL into the fabric of the school.** In order to effectively and efficiently address students' social and emotional needs, Lakewood has been developing a schoolwide focus on SEL, from explicit classroom instruction and infusion with academic content to PBIS. This requires that all adults, from leadership to support staff, understand the importance of SEL and know how to support it. SEL is not seen as something that is done through discrete lessons, but rather used as a lens to consider students' development.
- **Start with the social and emotional learning of the adults.** Lakewood seeks to develop the social and emotional competencies of the adults in the learning community, including school leaders. When teachers and principals are aware of their own emotions and how these emotions impact the classroom and school environment, they are more likely to support students in understanding their own emotions. In addition, adults who understand and practice social and emotional skills effectively are more likely to commit time and effort to develop SEL programs and practices that support students' growth in this area.
- **Create explicit opportunities to generate buy-in and engage teachers in making decisions about SEL implementation.** Educators are a key component of any SEL initiative; without their buy-in and commitment, resources allocated for SEL implementation could go to waste. By creating opportunities for teachers to learn about SEL through trainings, observing colleagues at their school or district, or attending conferences, educators can be active participants in making decisions about how SEL is implemented at their school. They can then be supported to execute that vision. Creating opportunities for learning, decision-making, and collaboration can create buy-in and strengthen teachers'

commitment to SEL. If principals are trained on how to support these opportunities, they can drive a positive staff culture and can make SEL initiatives sustainable through strong leadership and effective allocation of resources.

- **Create professional development on SEL that is explicit, sustained, and job-embedded.** Teachers, counselors, coaches, and other professionals working in schools benefit from training on how to teach social and emotional competencies and how to infuse SEL in teaching practices. As with all good professional development, follow-up and coaching are important components of educator learning, which ideally is differentiated based on the educator’s experience and prior exposure to SEL, and the needs of the student population being served. Teachers with a greater degree of experience with SEL implementation, such as cooperating teachers, can become district models and trainers to help other educators move their SEL practice forward.
- **Provide ongoing support to educators using SEL assessments for instructional purposes.** SEL assessments can provide meaningful data about students’ social and emotional skills that teachers can use to inform classroom instruction. Educators need sufficient time and training to understand the measurement tool and how it relates to the school’s SEL implementation framework before being asked to use and respond to data.

#### Resources for implementing SEL initiatives include:

- CASEL’s District Resource Center (<https://drc.casel.org>)
- Lessons and videos from Edutopia of what SEL looks like in action ([www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning](http://www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning))
- SEL Solutions at the American Institutes for Research ([www.air.org/resource/social-and-emotional-learning-sel-solutions-air](http://www.air.org/resource/social-and-emotional-learning-sel-solutions-air))
- Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child’s website ([www.crtwc.org](http://www.crtwc.org))

## Implications for Policy

This case study provides insight into what a collaboration between a teacher preparation program, district, and school can do to prepare educators to support students' social and emotional development. Their experiences need not be unique. Below are some ways in which policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels can encourage a focus on SEL across the teacher pipeline, from preservice preparation to professional development in schools.

- 1. States can include the knowledge and skills teachers need to support students' SEL in state teaching standards.** Institutions of higher education have begun to make SEL a greater priority in their coursework, but they are still struggling to find ways to integrate it consistently into their teacher preparation programs.<sup>82</sup> Including a strong focus on SEL in teaching standards could help bring coherence to the way that SEL is included in the scope and sequence of preservice coursework and create the expectation that all teachers need to meet these standards. California, for example, revised its teacher performance expectations in 2016 to have an increased focus on SEL, with its first expectation that teachers “apply knowledge of students, including their prior experiences, interests, and social-emotional learning needs.”<sup>83</sup> The inclusion of this competency may support an increased focus on SEL in the state's preservice programs, according to a survey of administrators.<sup>84</sup>
- 2. States or institutions of higher education can adopt performance assessments that require teacher candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in supporting students' SEL as a condition of teacher licensure.** Assessments, similar to statements of standards, can focus a field on common goals and begin to change the content of teacher preparation and teacher practice. Given California's new Teaching Performance Expectations<sup>85</sup> (which include specific standards regarding social-emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching that need to be met for licensure), teacher candidates at SJSU use time preparing for California's video-based performance assessment to reflect on their ability to provide a socially and emotionally safe learning environment. Some states require candidates to pass a performance assessment that evaluates the effectiveness of beginning teachers, such as the edTPA, which is used by nearly 800 educator preparation programs across 41 states.<sup>86</sup> The demonstration of skills that support student SEL could be added to existing or new performance assessments.<sup>87</sup>
- 3. Policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels can invest in university–district partnerships that strengthen teacher candidates' field experiences and enhance districts' ability to support students' SEL.** Student teaching experiences are at the heart of preservice programs, so it is critical that teacher candidates have strong cooperating teachers who effectively address the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning. Districts can likewise learn from universities' approach to SEL, as evidenced by the partnership between Sunnyvale School District and CRTWC. States and districts, as well as institutions of higher education, can incentivize these partnerships through funding and technical assistance. For example, state and foundation funding has allowed Southern Connecticut State University and New Haven School District to work together as part of the Comer School Development Program.<sup>88</sup> Funding for partnerships can also be leveraged under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) through Titles I, II, and IV, as well as through Teacher Quality Partnership Grants under Title II of the Higher Education Act.

- 4. Federal, state, and local leadership efforts can support school and district leaders' learning about SEL and their role in supporting teachers and students.** The story of Lakewood Elementary shows how important principal and district leadership are to sustaining a focus on SEL. High-quality principal development requires financial investments, but the benefits can be substantial when considering a principal's influence on school culture, teacher quality and retention, and, consequently, student outcomes.<sup>89</sup> States can use federal funds to offset the expense of principal preparation and training. ESSA permits states to set aside 3% of their Title II formula funds to strengthen the quality of school leaders, including by investing in principal recruitment, preparation, induction, and development. States may want to consider taking advantage of these targeted funds to make strategic investments in their school leader workforce. In addition, states can leverage other funds under Titles I and II of ESSA to invest in school leadership as a means to strengthen both teacher and school leader quality.
- 5. Policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels can also provide schools with resources and technical assistance as they seek to advance SEL.** Educators need to be trained to analyze schools' needs and implement high-quality programs, professional development, and school organizational changes that support students' development. Lakewood Elementary and Sunnyvale School District are fortunate to have professional development support from multiple sources, including CRTWC and the Santa Cruz/Silicon Valley New Teacher Project, but not all schools and districts know where to turn. Federal- or state-level support may include technical assistance such as program development and the facilitation of peer learning networks, as well as providing state and federal funding to bolster schools' efforts in supporting students' SEL. CASEL's Collaborating States Initiative, which works with states to support the implementation of quality SEL, offers a useful resource (<https://casel.org/collaborative-state-initiative/>).
- 6. States and districts can provide well-validated tools to measure SEL, school climate, and related school supports.** Well-designed and well-implemented measurement tools can help educators make strategic decisions about needed investments in student services and programs. Tools can range from measures of school climate and students' social-emotional competencies to diagnostic measures, such as protocols for observing and reflecting on educator practices and school structures.<sup>90</sup> Lakewood Elementary shows that staff buy-in to their professional development has been an important factor in its success, and staff surveys can strengthen educators' voice in their professional development, giving them an opportunity to weigh in on which supports they most need. Lakewood has also shown that teachers need support in learning how to properly use assessments of students' social and emotional competencies. Where assessments are provided, they should come with strong professional development for their use. Again, funding from ESSA, particularly Titles II and IV, can be used to fund support related to assessments.

## Conclusion

This study has examined the way that teachers can be effectively prepared for the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning, from preservice teacher preparation programs at San Jose State University to in-service professional learning at Lakewood Elementary School in Sunnyvale School District. It examines the factors that have contributed to their success, such as collaboration with a key partner, the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child, as well as the practices that set the foundation for educator and student learning. These educators recognize that social, emotional, and academic learning are intimately related, and that schools must attend to each of these dimensions if they are to effectively support the whole child. We hope that this study allows practitioners in the field, as well as policymakers across the nation, to learn from the work of these institutions and continue their work.



## Appendix A: Research Methods

SJSU's Department of Elementary Education was chosen as a case study site for preservice teacher preparation on SEL after several conversations with experts in the field and review of documents on teacher preparation for SEL.<sup>91</sup> The school site, Lakewood Elementary School in Sunnyvale School District, was selected using a screening procedure that involved nomination by a panel of experts in the fields of SEL and a selection interview with district and school leaders to confirm an explicit, well-established, schoolwide focus on social-emotional learning. Although other schools with strong practices were considered, Lakewood's partnership with CRTWC and SJSU was a deciding factor.

The researchers used mainly qualitative data for the studies of SJSU and Lakewood Elementary School, including observations (a university course, elementary school classes, and teacher trainings for cooperating teachers and k–5 staff), document analysis (university and school websites, training documents, publicly available videos, course syllabi, and research conducted by SJSU professors and CRTWC staff), and interviews and focus groups (with university faculty and supervisors, CRTWC staff, SJSU teacher candidates, school administrators, teachers, and coaches). Quantitative data sources included publicly available school record data (e.g., attendance rates and state achievement test performance in Sunnyvale School District) and survey data from former SJSU candidates, published in a study by WestEd. Analyses were centered on identifying how SEL is developed across key levels of the university and school context, including climate and culture, features and structures, and formal and informal practices.

In addition to the interviews conducted by the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), seven interviews with SJSU faculty were conducted by Nancy Markowitz and Wendy Thowdis at CRTWC for a separate study.<sup>92</sup> CRTWC's study began concurrently with LPI's work and had similar research questions, though for a different intended use. Patricia Swanson, chair of the SJSU Department of Teacher Education, requested that CRTWC and LPI share data to protect the time of university staff. The authors are grateful to CRTWC and SJSU faculty for their generosity in sharing audiotapes of these interviews, obtained with interviewees' written consent, and thank them for their significant contribution to this study. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations in this study are from interviews with LPI or those shared with LPI by CRTWC.

## Appendix B: CRTWC Mapping of Common Core State Standards to SEDTL/CRT Anchor Competencies

| Literacy Common Core  | Corresponding SEDTL/CRT Anchors   |
|---|---|
| Ask and answer questions to seek help, get information, ask for clarification   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trusting relationships</li> <li>• Foster self-reflection</li> <li>• Practice cooperative learning skills</li> </ul>  |
| Express thoughts, feelings & ideas clearly  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trusting relationships</li> <li>• Foster self-reflection</li> <li>• Foster growth mindset</li> </ul>   |
| Engage effectively in collaborative conversations with diverse partners   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trusting relationships</li> <li>• Respond constructively to conflict across differences</li> <li>• Practice cooperative learning skills</li> <li>• Create classroom community</li> </ul> |
| Mathematical Practices  | Corresponding SEDTL/CRT Anchors   |
| Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trusting relationships</li> <li>• Foster growth mindset</li> <li>• Cultivate perseverance</li> </ul>   |
| Construct viable arguments & critique the reasoning of others   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trusting relationships</li> <li>• Foster self-reflection</li> <li>• Practice cooperative learning skills</li> </ul>  |
| Next Generation Science Standards Practices   | Corresponding SEDTL/CRT Anchors   |
| Asking questions & defining problems  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trusting relationships</li> <li>• Foster self-reflection</li> <li>• Respond constructively to conflict across differences</li> </ul>   |
| Developing and using models   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trusting relationships</li> <li>• Practice cooperative learning skills</li> <li>• Create classroom community</li> </ul>  |
| Planning and carrying out investigations  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trusting relationships</li> <li>• Foster growth mindset</li> <li>• Cultivate perseverance</li> </ul>   |
| Engaging in argument from evidence  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trusting relationships</li> <li>• Practice cooperative learning skills</li> <li>• Respond constructively to conflict across differences</li> </ul>                                       |
| English Language Development Standards  | Corresponding SEDTL/CRT Anchors   |
| <b>Collaborative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exchange ideas via oral communication</li> <li>• Offer opinions and negotiate with or persuade other</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trusting relationships</li> <li>• Create classroom community</li> <li>• Practice cooperative learning skills</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Interpretive</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen actively and ask or answer questions</li> <li>• Evaluate how well writers and speakers use language to present/support ideas</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trusting relationships</li> <li>• Practice cooperative learning skills</li> <li>• Foster self-reflection</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Productive</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Express information and ideas in oral presentations</li> <li>• Support opinions or justify arguments and evaluate others' opinions or arguments</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trusting relationships</li> <li>• Create classroom community</li> <li>• Respond constructively to conflict across differences</li> </ul>   |

## Appendix C: Lakewood Staff Communication Guidelines

### Goals

We are inclusive of all because we believe it's worth the effort.

We engage in problem solving to grow individually & collectively.

We commit to building a supportive community for lifelong learning.

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### Email Communication Tips and Reminders

Lakewood Staff includes all Lakewood emails.

Please do not Reply All to Lakewood Staff emails. Reply to sender only.

All Staff emails may include timely reminders, recognition, requests. They should not include names of people or classes if the information includes critical feedback.

Remember that TONE!?! can be widely interpreted and MISINTERPRETED in email. Use the 24-hour rule when upset or emotional. When in doubt, email the individual to arrange an in-person check in.

*Engaging in Problem Solving is at the heart of growing as a community.*

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### Tips and Reminders About Problem Solving With Colleagues

1. Remember that disagreements and differences of opinion are inevitable when working with others, especially when committed and passionate about the work.
2. Arrange for a time for face-to-face conversation. Private conversations send message of intent to problem solve. Public conversations send message of intention to make a point. Invite a neutral party if you think it might help.
3. Communicate openly for the purpose of problem solving:
  - State what happened in terms of actions and impact.
  - Use "I" statements when describing impact. "I felt..."
  - Assume positive intentions with goal of uncovering potential misunderstanding.
  - Focus on how to move forward in the future.
4. Follow up with agreements. Great to give and get positive recognition for it, too.

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