

PREPARING YOUTH TO THRIVE

Methodology and Findings from the Social and Emotional Learning Challenge

Research Brief

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[AHA! \(Attitude, Harmony, Achievement\)](#)

[Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee](#)

[The Possibility Project](#)

[Philadelphia Wooden Boat Factory](#)

[Voyageur Outward Bound School](#)

[Wyman](#)

[Youth on Board](#)

[YWCA Boston](#)

The SEL Challenge was conducted as a partnership between the eight exemplary agencies listed above, SCE, the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality at the Forum for Youth Investment, and additional technical consultants. Charles Smith was the principal investigator for the Challenge. Gina McGovern was the Challenge project manager. Reed Larson (University of Illinois) was the primary consultant for qualitative methodology and analyses. Stephen C. Peck (University of Michigan) is the Weikart Center's technical consultant for measurement and psychological theory. Barb Hillaker and Leanne Roy supported the research teams. Methods Consultants of Ann Arbor provided analytic services.

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About the SEL Challenge

The SEL Challenge is a partnership among the Susan Crown Exchange (SCE), staff teams from eight exemplary out-of-school time (OST)¹ programs, the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality (CYPQ), and technical consultants. The partnership was created for two purposes: (1) identify promising practicesⁱ for building social and emotional learning (SEL) skills with vulnerable adolescents, and (2) develop technical supports for use of these SEL practices at scale in several thousand OST settings. The promising practices are featured in an SEL Field Guide, *Preparing Youth to Thrive: Promising Practices for Social Emotional Learning* (Smith, McGovern, Larson, Hillaker, & Peck, 2016), companion website, and a suite of tools and technical assistance (SELpractices.org). This Technical Report, *Preparing Youth to Thrive: Methodology and Findings from the SEL Challenge*, describes how the partnership completed the work of the Challenge and what we learned as a result.

Although there are many ways to define and discuss the importance of SEL skills for vulnerable adolescents, a great deal can be summarized using the terms *self-regulation* and *agency*. In general, an adolescent's ability to self-regulate—to manage emotions, attention, motivation, and behavior to achieve specific purposes—is related to a wide range of positive outcomes. Perhaps more importantly, the ability to intentionally shift focus away from environmental cues that cause reactive or negative emotional responses, or to choose to be in environments already free from these cues, is a powerful step toward transcendence of contexts that limit potential. When adolescents use self-regulatory powers to ignore distractions or choose environments that have higher developmental potential, they are often referred to as having agency.ⁱⁱ SEL skills are action skills for navigating and negotiating complicated real-world situations.

Although we have much to learn about social and emotional skills, we also have a great deal of evidence. For example, meta-analysesⁱⁱⁱ—studies that summarize across findings from many prior studies—have suggested that SEL skill-building curricula delivered in both OST and school settings have substantively important impact on a wide range of skills and outcomes (Durlak & Weissberg, 2010; Durlak et al., 2011). Further, the wider literature on SEL suggests that SEL skills transfer across settings and improve skill learning in other content areas (Durlak, 2015). In particular, this literature is consistent with the idea

¹ The term out-of-school time is used to refer to settings variously labeled afterschool, expanded learning, extracurricular clubs, summer camps, and sports; many mentoring, tutoring, apprenticeship, and workforce development programs; programs for disconnected and homeless youth; and some alternative schools.

that SEL skills are also learning skills, as both SEL interventions and SEL skills are associated with successful outcomes in settings where learning academic and other content is the central purpose.^{iv}

There is growing consensus about the many positive effects of SEL, but access to settings that build SEL skills are not equally available to all youth (Putnam, 2015). Because these skills are critical for healthy functioning across the life course, lack of access to environments that build these skills constitutes a developmental risk factor (Bailey, Duncan, Odgers, & Yu, 2015; Cunha & Heckman, 2006). Many American youth are vulnerable in ways similar to the Challenge participants: relentlessly exposed to a popular culture of violence and aggression; experiencing social exclusion, poverty, and instability in their neighborhoods and (sometimes) households; attending substandard and stressful schools; and exposed to environmental contaminants (Murphey et al., 2014). Chronic exposure to these stressful and traumatic experiences can produce negative effects across the life course (Blair & Raver, 2012; Evans & Fuller-Rowell, 2013; Jaffee & Christian, 2014). These are precisely the young people who most need settings designed to foster SEL skills and for whom they are often least available. The SEL Challenge was designed to help address these unmet needs.

In the SEL Challenge, we focused on descriptions of practices used by professional staff and performance benchmarks demonstrated by exemplary SEL organizations and offerings. These critical aspects of implementation are often not adequately described in the aforementioned SEL impact literature (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007, 2010; Durlak et al., 2011). By focusing on granular descriptions of adult behavior and youth experience at the point-of-service level, the Challenge content supports point-of-service level application in OST programs, regular school-day classrooms, mentorships, residential treatment, apprenticeships, workplace, families, and other contexts where the quality of adult-youth interaction is a primary concern. We hope that local policy makers and funders will use the SEL Challenge as a template for identifying local networks of expert practitioners and their exemplary programs, forms of social capital already available in many communities, and make sure that they are adequately recognized, resourced, and replicated.

Participants

Table 1 shows that organizations in the Challenge ranged widely in revenue and capacity, operating in the cities of Santa Barbara, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, New York, St. Paul, St. Louis, and Boston. Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee (BGCGM) operated with the largest annual organizational budget, \$24.8 million, whereas the Philadelphia Wooden Boat Factory (PWBF) operated with the smallest annual budget of \$525,000.

Each organization contributed one exemplary offering to participate in the Challenge. The offerings ranged in size from two to five staff and 11 to 45 youth. The average ratio of adults-to-youth was one to six, and all of the offerings provided at least two fully engaged staff at all times. Dosage, or amount of participation required by each offering, was intensive in all cases and varied from 39 to 370 contact hours. Seven of the offerings had a multi-year evaluation history, and four of the offerings—Wyman’s Teen Outreach Program (Allen, Philliber, Herrling, & Kuperminc, 1997), Voyageur Outward Bound School (VOBS) (Neil, 2003), The Possibility Project (TPP), and InIt at YWCA Boston (YW Boston)—were nationally disseminated, evidence-based program models.^v

Youth participation in the offerings was voluntary. Youth ranged in age from 12 to 19, and the average age was 15. Staff defined their programs as serving vulnerable youth, and they defined vulnerability in consistent ways: The youth presented low social and emotional skills during recruitment (e.g., introversion or few friends); lived in homes or neighborhoods where exposure to violence and toxic levels of stress were almost assured; were referred by a social service agency due to a history (e.g., foster care, juvenile offense) that was likely to include traumatic experience; and were exposed to systematic racism and exclusion.

We also asked the youth several questions about a few common risk indicators. For example, 29% of youth lived in a household where the highest educated adult did not go to college, 7% said they received mostly Cs and Ds in school, and 3% were not currently in school. For a measure of risk related to attachments and relationships, about 15% of the youth were indicated. Together, these risk indicators represented 35% of the participating youth.

Table 1. Organization Characteristics

	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Annual Operating Budget</i>	<i>Evidence- based model</i>
	Attitude, Harmony, Achievement! (AHA!)	Santa Barbara, CA	\$1M	N
	Boys & Girls Clubs Of Greater Milwaukee (BGCGM)	Milwaukee, WI	\$24.8M	N
	Philadelphia Wooden Boat Factory (PWBF)	Philadelphia, PA	\$525,000	N
	The Possibility Project (TPP)	New York, NY	\$700,000	Y
	Voyageur Outward Bound School (VOBS)	St. Paul, MN	\$3.1M	Y
	Wyman	St. Louis, MO	\$5.9M	Y
	Youth On Board (YOB)	Boston, MA	\$374,000	N
	YWCA Boston (YW Boston)	Boston, MA	\$2.2M	Y

Sources: Letters of Intent, Applications, Staff Survey.

Findings

Findings from the SEL Challenge include the standards for SEL practice, information about the suite of SEL performance measures, and the benchmarks from the performance studies.

(1) The SEL Challenge methodology successfully identified exemplary SEL offerings and produced 34 standards, 78 practice indicators, and 327 vignettes for building SEL skills with vulnerable youth. The SEL Field Guide, *Preparing Youth to Thrive: Promising Practices for Social and Emotional Learning*, is the primary presentation of findings for the Challenge. The standards are spread over six domains of practice—emotion management, empathy, teamwork, responsibility, initiative, and problem solving—and a set of five curriculum features. The successful selection of expert practitioners and exemplary offerings, and the validity of standards that were produced in partnership with these experts, were evaluated through performance studies using a suite of SEL performance measures designed for this purpose. Results from these studies indicated that the offerings were indeed exemplary.

(2) The suite of SEL performance measures developed for the Challenge are feasible to implement and demonstrate sufficient reliability and validity for both continuous improvement and evaluation uses. The suite of performance measures was feasible to implement using technical supports (e.g., training raters, data entry portal, site performance reports) in the typical range for many other implementations in the OST field. With some important caveats, the data produced by the performance measures demonstrate sufficient reliability and validity for use as part of a lower-stakes continuous improvement intervention and for more evaluative purposes where it is necessary to reliably differentiate between settings, individuals, and time points.

A theory for SEL skill measurement was assembled to differentiate between several mental processes related to skill learning—engagement by the context, focusing of attention and awareness, emotion-laden scripts and schemas—that were directly targeted by the specific standards and curriculum features. This was an opportunity to fit theory about the multilevel person-systems to prior work on multilevel setting-systems, extending the continuous improvement intervention from the policy level through a cascade of effects on settings, and ultimately, to intra-individual SEL skill growth.

(3) The performance studies indicate that the exemplary offerings were exceptionally high quality compared to other OST programs and that youth skills improved in all six SEL domains. Skill growth also occurred for the higher-risk groups. Benchmarks for SEL performance include:

(3.a) Diverse staff and youth, intensive participation, and expert adult guidance. The Challenge offerings were diverse in terms of ethnicity and risk. The program staff intentionally recruited ethnically diverse youth, and overall the Challenge cohort was 48% African American, 30% Hispanic, 14% White, and 8% Asian or Pacific Islander. In more ethnically-homogenous offerings, staff's ethnicity reflected the youth's ethnicity. All of the offerings targeted vulnerable youth, and these youth also represented diversity of SEL strengths and more difficult SEL histories. A total of 35% of youth were indicated as higher risk, but only 5% had more than one risk indicator.

All of the SEL offerings were intensive commitments for the youth, ranging between 20 and 75 sessions and between 39 and 370 contact hours. Almost all staff had a college degree and, in over half of the organizations, at least one team member had an advanced degree. The organizations had low staff turnover, and lead instructors' tenure ranged between eight months and 20 years, with one third of the staff in their current position for five years or more. Staff reported having expertise in their offering, but not necessarily in SEL, where only 50% of program managers and 11% of lead instructors rated themselves as experts in SEL.

(3.b) Highly collaborative organizational cultures. SEL Challenge organizations performed higher than a reference group on all measures of culture and climate. In particular, substantially higher performance on both staff-to-manager and staff-to-staff collaborative practices reflect the importance of staff supports identified in the curriculum features and opportunities to model SEL skills identified in the standards.

(3.c) Exceptionally high-quality instruction and youth engagement. SEL Challenge offerings were exceptionally high-performing contexts for two types of instructional quality: The quality of the project curriculum (Growth and Mastery scale) and the quality of the staff SEL practices (Instructional Total Score) were substantially higher than the comparison group. Staff SEL practices and youth engagement were assessed at three time points. Almost all youth reported very high engagement with the context at all time points.

(3.d) A consistent pattern of positive SEL skills growth across measures, offerings, and risk status. Youth SEL skills, as indicated by youth beliefs and behaviors, increased during the offering cycle. Three time point growth models demonstrate positive change on almost all measures in all six domains. Models also indicate that youth who entered the program at higher risk—in a lower SEL skill subgroup at baseline or in a subgroup indicated by measures of attachment-related anxiety, avoidance, and social phobia—also improved as much or more, on average, than students who started out with greater SEL skills.

(4) The exemplary offerings shared an OST-SEL intervention design: Project-based learning with co-regulation. In addition to use of the SEL practices identified by the standards, the exemplary offerings

shared several curriculum features: intensive participation in challenging project curricula; SEL curricula that include responsive practices and structured check-ins; the cycle-in, cycle-out sequence focused on deeper engagement with youth; and a broad and integrated approach to implementation of the SEL practices in the six domains identified by the standards. Together, these curriculum features constitute an OST-SEL intervention design – project based learning with co-regulation – for offerings with a primary purpose to build SEL skills with vulnerable adolescents.

Discussion

Efforts to define good practice are not new (American Psychological Association Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education, 2015; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Gideonse, 1988), and we are fairly certain that there are few new practices or ideas named in the Challenge work. Rather, the primary significance of the SEL Challenge study was the opportunity to describe offerings at a consistent granular level—adult behavior, basic instructional processes, short-term youth behavior change—and then align to these elements both vignettes in the voice of expert practitioners and performance measures. We believe that this is one of the best ways to move the policy agenda for high-quality OST forward because good measurement requires adequate description, and what gets measured can be moved—and funded.

The SEL standards, performance measures, and other content were designed to fit with an evidence-based continuous improvement intervention. The objectives of the intervention are a cascade of effects over multiple levels of setting to culminate in high-quality instruction, youth skill mastery, and skill transfer. This approach to building SEL skills using a continuous improvement intervention is already widely used in the OST field – and there are clear analogies to other sectors. For example, much of the infrastructure for SEL performance measurement described in this report is already available in local and state education agencies and supported in state laws and education agency policies. Further, even cursory review of the SEL practices described in the standards demonstrates a high degree of overlap with best practices for teaching identified by the learning sciences.

We suggest that the *project-based learning with intensive co-regulation* intervention design that characterized the offerings has direct applicability in the behavioral health and juvenile justice sectors. As residential treatment solutions continue to phase out, and more community-based solutions are developed, this OST-SEL intervention design may be a useful tool for professionals seeking prevention interventions with broad applicability. Further, as the juvenile justice field struggles with the decoupling of court disposition and confinement-based policies, the OST-SEL intervention may be a viable alternative treatment to prevent development of the core criminological factors. Recent meta-analytic evidence

suggests that features of effective programs have alignment with many of the SEL standards and curriculum features described in the Challenge offerings (Lipsey and Howell et al 2010).

We hope that local policy makers and funders will use the Challenge as a template for identifying the exemplary SEL services already available in their communities and make sure that they are adequately recognized, resourced, and replicated. Conversely, we also hope that the many organizations already doing high-quality SEL work can use the products of the Challenge to make the case for their work to local leaders. We know from experience that there are SEL experts in every community, and while it can take many years and substantial resources to retrain a regional workforce, identification of currently existing expertise is likely a cost-effective first step.

Finally, the OST-SEL intervention design requires staff with sufficient skills and with sufficient organizational supports to use these skills intentionally. Almost all of the exemplary offerings had at least one staff member trained as a social worker or counselor in the setting at all times, and almost all had staff-to-student ratios at or below one-to-eight. Conducting SEL practice at high quality will require both investment in staff preparation and, in many cases, investments in more staff. Further, almost all of the expert practitioner teams in the Challenge had at least one member who was a career practitioner of their craft. This suggests, again, that part of the short-term path to improving SEL skills at scale is in identifying expert practitioners who are already working in most communities and who have already been developing curricula with groups of youth who present with SEL needs.

Appendix A

Table 4. Summary of Domain Standards for SEL Practice

Emotion Management

Key Youth Experiences

Range of emotions. Youth experience a range of positive and challenging emotions in a safe context.

Emotion awareness and skill. Youth practice and develop healthy and functional emotion skills.

Staff Practices

Structure. Staff creates and adjusts the structure of daily activities to accommodate youth's processing of emotion.

Modeling. Staff model healthy strategies for dealing with emotion within the context of caring, mutually-respectful relationships with youth.

Coaching. Staff provides coaching to youth about handling and learning from their ongoing emotional experiences.

Empathy

Key Youth Experiences

Inequality and identity. Youth explore social structure and power in relation to themselves and others.

Diverse perspectives. Youth share their stories and listen to the stories of others.

Acceptance. Youth practice relating to others with acceptance and understanding.

Staff Practices

Structure. Staff provide programs with appropriate structure for sharing experience and promoting equity.

Modeling. Staff model empathy skills with youth.

Teamwork

Key Youth Experiences

Trust and cohesion. Youth develop group cohesion and trust.

Collaboration. Youth participate in successful collaboration.

Team challenge. Youth manage challenges to creating and maintaining effective working relationships.

Staff Practices

Structure. Staff provides programs with norms and structure.

Modeling. Staff model teamwork skills with youth.

Facilitating. Staff facilitates or intervenes as needed to foster or sustain youth-led group dynamics and successful collaboration.

Responsibility

Key Youth Experiences

Roles. Youth take on roles and obligations within program activities.

Demands. Youth encounter difficult demands.

Accomplishment. Youth draw on resources to fulfill challenging roles and internalize accomplishment.

Staff Practices

Structure. Staff provide structured but open-ended roles for youth.

Modeling. Staff model and fulfill their own roles.

Coaching. Staff promotes high expectations, respect youth's ownership of their roles, and provides help only as needed.

Initiative***Key Youth Experiences***

Set goals. Youth set ambitious but realistic goals.

Motivation. Youth develop and sustain motivation by doing work that matters to them.

Perseverance. Youth have experiences persevering through the ups and downs of difficult work.

Staff Practices

Scaffolding. Staff provides ongoing assistance to help youth develop motivation within the work.

Coaching. Staff encourages youth to persist through challenging work, making sure that the effort behind youth's achievements is recognized.

Problem Solving***Key Youth Experiences***

Projects. Youth engage in projects that involve organizing actions over time.

Planning-action cycles. Youth learn through cycles of strategic planning, execution, responding to emergent problems, trial and error, and reflection on outcomes.

Outcomes verify skills. Youth reflect on how outcomes of their work provide information that helps build and verify youth skills.

Staff Practices

Structure. Staff provides sufficient structure to youth-driven projects.

Modeling. Staff creates opportunities for youth to observe models of successful work.

Scaffolding. Staff provides assistance, as needed, to help youth learn and solve problems on their own.

Reflection. Staff offers youth opportunities for reflection on project outcomes.

Appendix B

Table 6. Summary of SEL Performance Measures – Construct Name and Description

<i>System Level – Policy Quality</i>	
Accountability:	Accountable for quality, shared quality standard, collaborates across sites.
<i>Organization Level – Management Quality</i>	
School Day Content:	Link with school day academics, participation in parent-teacher conferences.
Staff Capacity:	Staff is trained, received program orientation, has adequate retention and staff/student ratios, are given time to plan, and have student goals in mind for program objective.
Horizontal Communication:	Staff co-plan program policies or activities with other staff, discuss problems, and observe or are observed by other staff.
Vertical Communication:	Supervisor provides feedback, is visible during program, knows what is being accomplished, challenges staff, and makes sure program goals and priorities are clear.
Job Satisfaction:	Position is close to ideal, satisfied with job and would not change career.
Manageable Workload:	The workload does not prevent staff from doing a good job
<i>Point-of-Service Level – Instructional Quality</i>	
Youth Governance:	Youth begin their own projects, select content, and design space. Youth involved in hiring, budgeting, return as leaders, develop partners.
Curriculum Planning:	Sessions are planned in advance, targets specific learning goals, builds upon prior sessions, takes into account student feedback, and combines academic content with student interests.
Growth & Mastery:	Students exposed to new experiences, responsibilities, and tasks that increase in complexity, long term group projects, acknowledge achievements, and identify personal strengths.
Instructional Quality:	A structured environment with guidance and encouragement, opportunities for leadership and collaboration, and the capacity to promote planning and reflection.
Engagement:	Youth find activities important, use skills, have to concentrate, experience moderate challenge.
<i>Youth SEL Skills: Beliefs about Self and Behavior in Setting</i>	
Emotion Management	
-	Beliefs: Optimism; Emotion Reappraisal; Identification of Emotions
-	Behavior: Identify positive and negative emotions (e.g., excitement, anger, joy); Reason about causes and uses of emotion; Manages emotions for functional purpose
Empathy	
-	Beliefs: Adolescent Empathy
-	Behavior: Values own/others perspectives and stories with sensitivity to context
Teamwork	
-	Beliefs: Adolescent Social Competency
-	Behavior: Practices respectful and effective communication within a team; Coordinates and supports action toward team goals
Responsibility	
-	Beliefs: Adolescent Diligence and Reliability
-	Behavior: Fulfills Roles and Commitments; Successfully defines, adjusts, and negotiates roles and commitments when required
Initiative	
-	Beliefs: Adolescent Initiative Taking; Adolescent Purpose
-	Behavior: Develops and hones motivation for the OST task; Perseveres through internal and external circumstances that challenge the OST work
Problem Solving	
-	Beliefs: Adolescent Goal Orientation; Problem Solving Strategies
-	Behavior: Intentionally learns OST-task related methods and tools (e.g., carpentry); Uses problem-solving skills to develop, evaluate, and adapt a course of action; Successfully manages time; Connects with external stakeholders; Reflects on learning and significance of results

Endnotes

- ⁱ “Promising” typically indicates that the practice is both theoretically defined and has some supporting evidence of effectiveness - but not from a sufficiently rigorous design to move the designation to “evidence-based practice.” We could easily make an argument that many of these practices could be considered evidence-based given the depth and rigor of the Larson et al. literature and the Weikart Center’s prior work.
- ⁱⁱ Contexts associated with poverty, traumatic experience, and chronic stress can cause dysregulation of emotion, motivation, attention, and behavior, and ultimately, limit youth experience of agency and developmental potential. As adolescents accumulate experience with successful self-regulation, they develop increasing confidence that, with effort, they can engage positive contexts and overcome challenging ones. SEL skills developed through experiences of successful self-regulation likely moderate the effects of earlier negative experience on outcomes in early adulthood. In short, the recovery and healthy development of adolescents suffering the effects of difficult SEL histories is likely to be fostered through exposure to contexts like the exemplary SEL offerings identified in the Challenge. These ideas are discussed in several disciplines (for example: Blair & Raver, 2012; Bryck & Fisher, 2012; Côté, 2000; Côté & Levine, 2002; Curtis & Cicchetti, 2007; Evans & Fuller-Rowell, 2013; Murray, Rosanbalm, Christopoulos, & Hamoudi, 2015).
- We identify two forms of agency (Peck, 2007) that go along with the practice of SEL skills. First, *Type 1 Agency* describes the mental experience of having your skills successfully put to work, more or less automatically, and often outside of the immediate focus of awareness. Type 1 Agency corresponds to the concept of *primary appraisal* (See Appendix C; cf., Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, 2001; C. A. Smith & Kirby, 2000). Many OST environments, particularly those designed for elementary-aged children, are specifically designed to help kids feel safe, interested in the content, and successful at demonstrating skills. Successful self-regulation increases the likelihood that the context can successfully activate mental processes that create engagement (rather than avoidance).
- Second, *Type 2 Agency* describes forms of executive control where youth focus awareness on challenges and making well-informed decisions about what to do next. Type 2 Agency corresponds to the concept of *secondary appraisal* (See Appendix C; cf., Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, 2001; C. A. Smith & Kirby, 2000). In addition to effectively using skills more or less automatically, now the context should support the experience of more extended learning sequences such as trial, error, and adjustments or selection, optimization, compensation (cf. Baltes, 1997). OST environments for adolescents often include project-based curricula and youth control within their intervention designs, requiring higher levels of self-regulation. When doing SEL work, researchers and practitioners should attend equally to both forms of agency.
- ⁱⁱⁱ The Durlak et al. meta-analyses were directly focused on SEL offerings in OST and a mix of universal and targeted interventions in schools. The SAFE practices – sequenced, active, focused, and explicit – that were found to differentiate effective from ineffective programs are aligned with curriculum features identified in the SEL Challenge (Durlak & Weissberg, 2010; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Feldman Farb & Matjasko, 2012; Gottfredson & Wilson, 2003; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Lipsey, Howell, Kelly, Chapman, & Carver, 2010; Porath-Waller, Beasley, & Beirness, 2010; Wheeler, Keller, & DuBois, 2010).
- ^{iv} It is evident that SEL skills are not only necessary for youth to successfully learn, as is suggested by the many meta-analyses linking self-regulation to learning outcomes, but that many of the SEL practices described in the standards are themselves best practices for teaching academic and other content. Several examples: (1) The Emotion Management and Initiative domains are focused explicitly on self-regulation of emotion and motivation. In the standards, SEL skills are organized as a hierarchy, with practice indicators across domains addressing first declarative (naming things) and then procedural (how to do things) beliefs (e.g., EM3, EM6, E1, T7, R5, PS1). Practice indicators in all domains also describe the practice of scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1962); that is, providing just enough support to enable a learner to achieve more than what they could without that support. (e.g., T9b, R9, I5, I6, PS12, PS13). The project curricula from the offerings assured complex goal structures that provided lots of opportunities for higher-order problem solving (Oosterhof, Rohani, Sanfilippo, Stillwell, & Hawkins, 2008) for youth with roles on interdependent teams (Slavin, 1996).

^v Wyman's Teen Outreach Program participated in several empirical research studies to evaluate both the behavioral outcomes and the process mechanisms that lead to positive outcomes for TOP participants. Read about the studies and future plans for additional research at: www.wymancenter.org. VOBS is a member of Outward Bound USA, an organization that assures consistent program standards across many experiential education providers. Read more at <http://www.outwardbound.org>. YW Boston's Youth Leadership Initiative is an adaptation of the national model of Anytown, a summer social justice experience developed and spread through the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ). Read more at: <https://nccj.org>. TPP has been replicated by numerous partner organizations in several states. Read more at <http://the-possibility-project.org>.

The Social and Emotional Learning Challenge was designed to identify promising practices for building skills in six areas: emotion management, empathy, teamwork, initiative, responsibility, and problem solving. The Challenge was a partnership between expert practitioners delivering exemplary programs in eight unique communities, a team of researchers, and a national foundation. This technical report includes a discussion of theory and methodology used to produce the SEL Challenge findings. This technical report is written for agency leaders, evaluators, funders, consultants, and policy makers who want to assess the validity of the SEL Challenge findings or mount their own local Challenges.

Preparing Youth to Thrive: Methodology & Findings from the SEL Challenge is brought to you by:



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