



# Quick Reference Guide: School Level Social and Emotional Supports

## Safe and Supportive School Climates

School leaders prioritize a school climate in which all ELs have safe and collaborative learning environments and all teachers embrace responsibility for developing students' social and emotional competencies.

Students learn best in environments where they feel safe, supported, challenged and accepted. These kinds of school climates support student engagement with the curriculum, academic achievement, development of positive relationships with each other and school members, social competence. This positive school climate also leads to fewer negative behaviors and self-reported personal issues and promote educator satisfaction. Safe and supportive schools as defined by the federal [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#) and [by Massachusetts](#) are especially important for ELs, who often face a variety of social and emotional challenges as they get used to a new language, culture, school system and community. School leaders play a key role in establishing and maintaining school cultures that support positive climates for ELs.

## Tiered Response to Strengths and Needs

School staff respond to a range of social and emotional needs using a tiered approach.

Because ELs' are a diverse group, their social and emotional needs are also varied. For example, newcomers who left war-torn countries may experience trauma from being separated from family members during the immigration process or other traumatic changes to their lives. Undocumented students often experience stress from fear of deportation. Students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) may be unfamiliar with schools as well as a new cultural context. In contrast, recently arrived ELs with high levels of formal education may experience frustration trying to learn content in a new language they are not yet proficient in. In response, effective supports for ELs are culturally responsive, differentiated and flexible, adjusted as ELs learn and grow. They are intentionally and strategically coordinated to maximize effectiveness. For example, [tiered support systems](#) can be a useful frame for leveraging EL strengths and addressing needs. They provide a foundation of high-quality instruction (linguistic, academic, and social-emotional) and a system for aligning tailored supports in ways that respond to student progress and/or need.

### Sample Tiered Actions to Support ELs' Social and Emotional Learning

#### Tier 1

- Providing professional learning focused on [social-emotional learning](#) (SEL) strengths and challenges of different EL populations and how to relate to ELs from different cultures and backgrounds
- Establishing formal processes for how teaching SEL competencies will be integrated with instruction of ELs
- Establishing norm and values that support staff and educators in building relationships with students
- Reviewing and revising school policies and norms to ensure they are culturally and linguistically responsive
- Developing individualized SEL plans based on ELs' background and educational goals
- Developing peer mentoring and advising groups of ELs and non-ELs
- Establishing goals, metrics and a data collection system for EL

#### Tiers 2 and 3

- Developing Response to Intervention (RTI) protocols related to the strengths and needs of the school's EL population
- Establishing collaborative teams of educators (ESL, special education, and content area teachers, guidance counselor, etc.) and community members (social worker, mental health provider, etc.) to review EL student academic, linguistic, and socio-emotional progress and make recommendations on program placement, interventions, and supports needed (such as [Language Assessment Teams](#), Student Support Teams)

## Leveraging Partnerships

School leaders are aware of linguistic and cultural supports available in the district and build partnerships with families and community-based organizations to address the social and emotional needs of ELs.

The needs of English learners are not only varied, but at times may be urgent and severe – outside the scope of the services and supports an individual school can provide. School leaders can partner with key stakeholders (EL parents, other schools, the community) to identify EL assets and needs, coordinate existing services and supports, and promote the development of new ones when needed. For example, when effectively engaged as partners, families of ELs can support socio-emotional learning by being role models, providing a supportive environment for learning,

reinforcing learning outcomes, sharing cultural norms and traditions with educators, and sharing educational goals and family background necessary for understanding student strengths and challenges. Community-based individuals and organizations can assist schools in providing wrap around services for ELs such as mental health support, meeting food and shelter, and helping ELs develop a sense of belonging in their new community. These partnerships are key to [improving schools](#) as a whole. They also help promote safe and supportive schools by ensuring services to ELs are [cohesive, comprehensive, mutually reinforcing, tailored to individual needs, and organized around common goals](#).

### **Actions-at-a-Glance: Social and Emotional Supports**

Social and Emotional Supports: What can educators at the school level do?

- Ensure educators and staff understand what [social and emotional learning \(SEL\)](#) is and share responsibility for helping ELs develop SEL competencies
- Promote the development of trusting relationships between students and educators through clear, consistent, and culturally responsive practices and procedures
- Provide students and families access to linguistically, culturally, age, and developmentally appropriate services integrated into a welcoming school culture
- Ensure all elements of school operations (leadership, professional learning opportunities, policies and processes, academic and non-academic strategies and programs, engagement with families, etc.) support the teamwork needed to maintain safe and supportive climates for ELs
- Reinforce safe and supportive school expectations through regular school climate [data collection](#) and monitoring
- Connect school climate monitoring to district-wide efforts by participating in teams and or initiatives focused on this area
- Incorporate goals and metrics related to social and emotional learning in school council conversations and planning, in alignment with district and state priorities
- Prioritize a regular process, structure and time for communicating, strategizing, and tracking student progress towards common goals with community partners

## Planning Resources

### **DESE Practical Tools and Resources**

[Guidebook for Inclusive Practice Job-Embedded PD Planning Guide](#) highlights social and emotional learning professional development as one of three evidence-based frameworks for promoting inclusive practice.

[National Center for Safe Supportive Learning Environments Website Resources](#) provides information about creating and sustaining safe and supporting learning environments,

[Safe and Supportive Schools Self-Reflection Tool](#) supports schools in documenting current practices that support students' behavioral health, examining the role of various school professionals and staff in providing student supports, identifying their most pressing local priorities and creating action plans to address these priorities.

[Social and Emotional Learning for All: Access, Cultural Proficiency, and Cultural Responsiveness](#) provides tools for examining the extent to which SEL is culturally responsive and shares resources and strategies for increasing the linkage between SEL and culturally responsive teaching. It also helps educators reflect about their current practice and provides tools for enacting culturally responsive SEL in schools and classrooms.

[Social and Emotional Learning in Massachusetts](#) provides an introduction to SEL in Massachusetts Public Schools, including a definition and related competencies, and a variety of resources for supporting SEL (tiered systems and culturally responsive teaching, Resources to Support SEL Guiding Principles for ELA and for Math, and SEL professional learning opportunities).

[Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice](#) provides educators and administrators with user-friendly tools based on guiding principles from Universal Design for Learning, Social and Emotional Learning, and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports to build and strengthen inclusive practice, including the Social and Emotional Learning Planning Tool (p. 81).

### **DESE Guidance**

[Principles of Effective Practice for Integrating Student Supports](#) describes how a Safe and Supportive School (SaSS) effectively integrates services that appropriately support individual students (p. 1-7).

[Guidelines on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning Curricula K-12](#) presents information on social and emotional learning in Massachusetts, including laws, regulations and related initiatives (see guidance for implementing SEL efforts to support safe and supportive learning environments o p. 6-10 and examples for how to integrate SEL in content area instruction on p. 11-19 and Appendix A).

[Safe and Supportive Schools](#) provides guidance and resources for promoting positive learning environments and school climates for all, including a definition of safe and supportive schools, the Principles of Effective Practice for Integrating Student Supports and Students' Voices: Their Perspectives on How Schools Are and Should Be.

[Next Generation ESL Project: Curriculum Resource Guide](#) provides recommendations for EL instruction, including information about tiered systems of supports for ELs with disabilities (ESL/SWD Information Cards) and Response to Intervention (RTI) considerations for ELs (p. 166-169).

[English Learner Education Programs](#) provides information about different programs for ELs, including guidance for Sheltered English Immersion, Dual Language Education, and Transitional Bilingual Education.

[Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education \(SLIFE\)](#) provides definition, guidance and resources for supporting this population of ELs (see the [Interactive Guide](#)).

[Guidance for Supporting English Learners with Disabilities](#) provides information for supporting this population of ELs (see Support Systems for Collaboration on p. 5-6 and Providing ELE Programs and Services to ELs with Disabilities and related Educator Spotlight on Collaboration on p. 14-15).

## **Federal Resources**

[Quick Guide on Making School Improvements](#) outlines activities for making school climate improvements and ideas for implementing them.

[English Learner Toolkit Chapter 5](#) Tool #2 provides resources to address bullying and harassment of ELs.

[Newcomer Toolkit](#) provides information and resources for educators, principals, and other school staff who work directly with immigrant students—including asylees and refugees—and their families including information about how to provide welcoming environments for newcomers and their families ([Chapter 2](#)), supporting newcomers social and emotional needs ([Chapter 4](#)), and developing partnerships with EL families ([Chapter 5](#)).

[Resource Guide: Supporting Undocumented Youth](#) provides research-based and promising practices for supporting this population (see Tips for Secondary School Educators, Counselors, and Other Personnel on p. 9-16).

[Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline](#) is a resource to assist states, districts, schools, and other stakeholders who are seeking to develop school climate and school discipline policies and practices that are both locally tailored and grounded in recognized promising practices and research.

[Social and Emotional Supports for Newcomer Students](#) provides ideas for helping acclimate newcomer ELs to their new environment and addressing the impact of trauma and emotional stress, particularly in the case of unaccompanied youth.

[Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports \(PBIS\)](#) provides guidance and resources related to PBIS to support schools, districts, and states to build systems capacity for implementing a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional and behavior support.

## **Other Featured Resources**

[Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) provides definition, guidance, tools and resources for implementing Universal Design for Learning.

[Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning \(EASEL\) Laboratory](#) explores the effects of high-quality social-emotional interventions on the development and achievement of children, youth, teachers, parents, and communities and provides multiple resources for SEL.

[Explore SEL](#) is a navigator for the field of social and emotional learning that provides information and tools that summarize and connect the major frameworks and skills in the field to support transparency and informed decision-making.

[Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\) Collaborating States Initiative Resources](#) provides useful materials for implementing SEL.

[SEL Learning Guides](#) provide rationale for SEL, characteristics of high-quality SEL programs at the elementary and secondary levels, tools and resources for engaging parents in SEL, and ideas for partnering with community members to support SEL.

[School Climate and Social and Emotional Learning](#) presents research on how positive school climates support SEL and how improved SEL contributes to improved school climate in elementary and secondary schools and discusses school climate, SEL, and blended models that have effects on school climate and social and emotional competence.

[Social-Emotional Learning Skills & Culturally Responsive Teaching Heuristic](#) integrates principles of culturally responsive teaching with SEL core competencies.

[Guidelines for Educating Limited English Proficient Students with Interrupted Formal Education](#) provides information about effective programming for SLIFE (p. 13-21) and instructional methods to teaching SLIFE students (p. 26-31).

[Immigrant Students and Secondary School Reform: Compendium of Best Practices](#). (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2004). Provides best practices for supporting immigrant students, including SLIFE (p. 11-24).

[Focus on SLIFE: Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education](#) provides tips and suggestions for teaching SLIFE, including academic and social-emotional factors that may affect this group of students, the benefits of building community partnerships, how to assess student readiness levels, and considerations for instructional planning.