

THE KEY TO BRINGING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING TO LIFE

Highlights from an evaluation of work with California school districts



Partnership for Children & Youth launched the Expanded Learning 360°/365 initiative in 2015 to address an overlooked opportunity:

school districts' interest in social-emotional learning (SEL) was growing just as California's expanded learning system—afterschool and summer programs at 4,400 schools receiving \$700 million in public funding—was simultaneously working to improve social and emotional outcomes. A professional learning community of diverse school districts focused on planning, aligning, and implementing SEL across the school day, afterschool, and summer. This brief includes highlights from an American Institutes for Research formative assessment of the professional learning community from January 2017 to December 2018.

SEL IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS IN ACTION

- **Los Angeles Unified:** Passed school board resolution supporting SEL implementation during school day; designed and implemented SEL programming in elementary schools
- **Santa Ana Unified:** Aligned Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports “look fors” so school-day and expanded learning staff can consistently reinforce positive behavior
- **San Francisco Unified:** Piloted SEL trainings at seven schools and expanding to additional sites



- ❖ Social-emotional learning is the foundation for academic success for all students, especially children experiencing trauma and extreme stress.
- ❖ Collaboration between school-day, afterschool, and summer program staff results in successful social-emotional learning implementation.
- ❖ School districts need expert support for collaboration and implementation to be effective.



“ The work shifted our thinking around what it takes to implement SEL districtwide and realizing that when we talk about [SEL], it's not just about the school-day [staff], but it's school-day and afterschool.

– Professional learning community team lead

EVALUATION FINDINGS

STRENGTHS OF THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

- ❖ **Environment, Structure, and Inclusive Practice:** Fostered trust, respect, and collective responsibility through consistent collaborative planning across district and expanded learning members.
- ❖ **Alignment Across Sectors:** Included time to share achievements, reflect on lessons learned, collaborate across roles, and learn from guest speakers about SEL policy and research.
- ❖ **Implementation Strategies:** Promoted group and individual reflection guided by Partnership for Children & Youth, who monitored team alignment, implementation, action planning, and continuous improvement strategies.



“ **Fundamentally, the Partnership for Children & Youth consultant role is at the pulse of the professional learning community team achievements, needs, and ongoing learning.**

– American Institutes for Research

Interest in SEL among California educators systemwide continues to grow, and demand for proven, effective planning and implementation support far outweighs supply. Partnership for Children & Youth is eager to leverage the tools and strategies from Expanded Learning 360°/365 to deepen and expand SEL support for districts and expanded learning programs in more communities across California.

IMPACT ON SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- ✓ **Increased Professional Development:** Monthly videos, articles, and activities to build common SEL understanding; meetings to align practices; and sessions to build culturally responsive teaching practices and student and adult SEL strategies.
- ✓ **Collaboration Between School-Day and Expanded Learning Staff:** Deliberate efforts built into SEL action plans included joint classroom walkthroughs and expanded learning staff participating in school-day staff meetings.
- ✓ **Stronger Data Usage and Sharing:** Engaged in a cycle of continuous improvement using student data to establish system- and site-level goals, assess readiness, and track progress; including pre-post measures of relationship skill-building, SEL competencies, school climate, and program observations.

TWO KEY LESSONS FOR THE FIELD

1. Collaboration and accountability are powerful forces for change.

The evaluation affirmed Partnership for Children & Youth’s commitment to collaboration—and confidence that skilled facilitation is an essential catalyst for deep, effective collaboration. The evaluation also validated the action plan as an organizing and accountability tool, particularly when coupled with consultant support and an intentional improvement process.

2. Districts need more support to deepen and implement their SEL approaches.

Partnership for Children & Youth staff found that school-day staff in the professional learning community want more support with SEL implementation. Where support exists, it is often focused on instruction, not the structures to scale and sustain the work across the district.