



Finding Common Ground:

Connecting Social-Emotional Learning During and Beyond the School Day

May 2016

The Common Core State Standards represent ambitious and holistic goals for student learning, which California schools have committed to pursue. Embedded in the standards are strong expectations regarding “non-academic” skills that are important to student success. Simultaneously, school leaders in California face increased accountability for student engagement and school climate, along with critiques of previous student behavior and discipline policies.

Taken together, these changes are creating a new emphasis on social-emotional skills as a cornerstone of student success; an emphasis that is affecting what happens in classrooms during the regular school day, and in programs serving young people during out-of-school hours.

K-12 educators and the expanded learning community that provides after school and summer programs are natural allies in this effort, particularly in California where the public investment in school-based programs has been substantial. The expanded learning community has built a standard of quality over the last two decades based on youth development principles, in the process strengthening and deepening their expertise in the area of social-emotional learning.

School day and expanded learning professionals can most effectively develop their students’ social-emotional skills when they work together, providing students with consistent social-emotional learning strategies and environments. Unfortunately, these educators don’t always speak the same language. Too often they fail to recognize their common purpose, in part because they use different terminology and operate in silos.

This brief describes the broad common ground that exists between K-12 and expanded learning programs when it comes to both strategies and practices that address social-emotional learning. These approaches use different language, but as this brief outlines, they translate into a very similar set of outcome goals that are critical to young people’s success in school, work, and life.

We believe that a shared understanding of the terminology can help K-12 and expanded learning leaders build more coherence between their programs, coordinate more effectively, and maximize the impact of resources and supports. The purpose of this brief is to begin to build bridges between the many initiatives currently underway across California’s K-12 landscape. As outlined below, it is not about creating “new” programs or strategies but linking the assets and infrastructure currently in place in schools and districts across the state.

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Case Study: San Francisco Unified School District

Throughout this brief, descriptions of the work done within the San Francisco Unified School District illustrate how school day and after school programs can better align their social-emotional learning efforts.

Background Information

**Student Success Comes Full Circle:
Leveraging Expanded Learning Opportunities**

A previous publication, by Expanded Learning 360°/365 in May 2015, outlined a shared understanding of what and how expanded learning programs contribute to social-emotional learning. *Finding Common Ground* is directly informed by and connected to the framework and research cited in *Student Success Comes Full Circle*.

Youth Development: Social-emotional learning is at the heart of expanded learning programs

Leaders in California’s expanded learning community have defined the social-emotional outcomes that are most directly linked to expanded learning programs and practices.¹ These foundational outcomes include:

- **Self-awareness**
- **Self-management**
- **Social awareness**
- **Interpersonal skills**
- **Self-efficacy**
- **Growth mindset**

The outcomes listed reflect expanded learning programs’ long-standing commitment to youth development principles. These principles, based in resilience research and asset-based programming, have guided program leaders for more than two decades. Youth development theory articulates three general areas of desired youth outcomes, which map well to the social-emotional outcomes. These three areas are:

- **To be productive:** Requires both self-awareness and self-management
- **To be connected:** Requires social awareness and interpersonal skills
- **To navigate** (among multiple worlds, around pressures, and through transitions): Requires a sense of self-efficacy and a growth mindset

California’s recently adopted *Quality Standards for Expanded Learning Programs*² are deeply rooted in youth development theory. With the implementation of legislation in 2015, programs that receive state grants are now required to demonstrate their efforts to reach these standards. In doing so, they are intentionally implementing programming that supports the same social-emotional outcomes that schools care about.

The relevant standards for expanded learning programs include:

- **Safe and supportive environment:** The program provides a safe and nurturing environment that supports the developmental, social-emotional, and physical needs of all students.
- **Active and engaged learning:** The program design and activities reflect active, meaningful, and engaging learning methods that promote collaboration and expand student horizons.
- **Skill building:** The program maintains high expectations for all students, intentionally links program goals and curricula with 21st century skills, and provides activities to help students achieve mastery.
- **Youth voice and leadership:** The program provides and supports intentional opportunities for students to play a meaningful role in program design and implementation, and provides ongoing access to authentic leadership roles.
- **Healthy choices and behaviors:** The program promotes student well-being through opportunities to learn about and practice balanced nutrition, physical activity, and other healthy choices in an environment that supports a healthy lifestyle.
- **Diversity, access, and equity:** The program creates an atmosphere in which students experience values that embrace diversity and equity.

¹ There are many facets of social-emotional skills beyond the list here and similarly other social-emotional skills that can be impacted by expanded learning programs, but these are the six identified as most aligned in the *Student Success Comes Full Circle* paper.

² Quality Standards for Expanded Learning in California: www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ba/as/documents/qualstandexplern.pdf

New K-12 Goals: Student success has broadened to explicitly include social-emotional learning

In the K-12 reform discussion, there was a call for schools to cultivate 21st century skills that would prepare young people for productive roles as adults in the new century. More recently, educators have been talking about the need for all students to graduate ready for college, career, and civic participation. These reforms go beyond traditional academic skills to encompass learning objectives for students that are consistent with social-emotional learning. These skills are often referred to as “the 4 C’s – communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity.”

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics incorporated the 4 C’s into the grade-by-grade academic standards that have become the foundation for K-12 instruction in California. While the 4 C’s are not explicitly mentioned in the state’s official standards documents, they are embedded within the standards for English Language Arts and for Mathematics. The English Language Arts standards define the “capabilities expected of a literate individual,” and the Mathematics standards outline a set of “standards of mathematical practice.”

The English Language Arts capabilities call for:

- **Social awareness:** students need to work to “understand what an author/speaker is saying”; and “understand other perspectives and cultures.”
- **Interpersonal skills:** students need to “adapt their communications to their audience; communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds”; and “make their own reasoning clear.”
- **Self-efficacy:** students need to be “self-directed learners” and to “articulate their own ideas.”

The Mathematics standards of practice call for:

- **Self-awareness:** students need to be able to “monitor their progress and change course if necessary.”
- **Social awareness:** students should be able to “apply the mathematics they know to solve problems arising in everyday life, society, and the workplace.”
- **Interpersonal skills:** students need to “justify their conclusions, communicate them to others, and respond to the arguments of others”; to “ask useful questions to clarify or improve the arguments”; and to “communicate precisely to others.”
- **Self-efficacy:** students need “a productive disposition...coupled with a belief in diligence and one’s own efficacy.”
- **Growth mindset:** students need to persevere in solving problems; and to be comfortable making assumptions, “realizing that these may need revision later.”

The CORE Districts, a group of ten member school districts, have created a set of indicators for measuring students’ social-emotional skills. These will sound familiar, as they include:

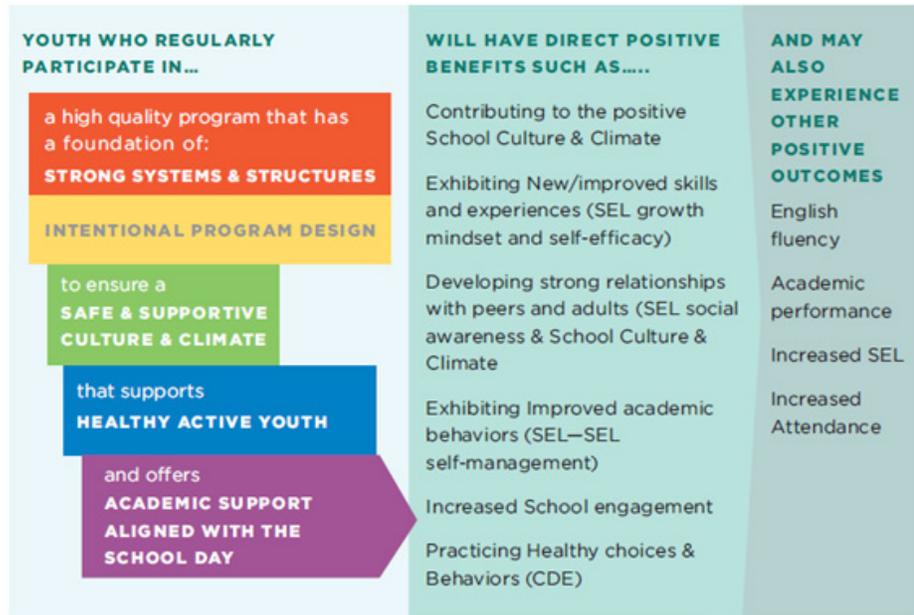
- **Self-management:** Coming to class prepared, paying attention, avoiding distractions, and modulating one’s anger or frustration.
- **Social awareness:** The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior (e.g., respect for diversity, empathy).
- **Self-efficacy:** A student’s belief that she can exercise control over her personal learning process.
- **Growth mindset:** Believing that one’s most basic abilities (including intellectual ability) can be developed through study, practice, dedication, and hard work.

San Francisco Unified School District

Speaking the Same Language

As one of the CORE Districts, San Francisco Unified School District has identified a set of social-emotional learning outcomes. The district’s after school programs office, ExCEL, in turn created a Quality Action Plan (QAP) for the continuous improvement of expanded learning programs. The QAP’s Theory of Action provides expanded learning staff with the same terminology being used by school day staff, giving program leaders a schema for explaining how their work fits into the larger district goals.

ExCEL THEORY OF ACTION:



Adapted from the ExCEL After School Quality Action Plan

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Youth Development

New K-12 Goals

K-12 Student Behavior Strategies

Expanded Learning Quality Standards

State LCFF Priorities

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K-12 Student Behavior Strategies: Schools are using explicit instruction to address student behavior and social-emotional skills

At the same time that the measures of student success are shifting, there is also a movement in the K-12 world to improve students' academic performance and address the achievement gap by directly focusing on student behavior. Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) is perhaps the most common acronym, but one that is often mistaken for a set curriculum rather than a general approach. This movement has borrowed from the fields of criminal justice on one hand and special education on the other as it has worked to define what direct instruction around behavior should teach, when it should be used, and how it should be structured.

What should behavioral instruction teach?

The specific outcome goals of any PBIS system are locally determined, but PBIS principles call for members of the school community to:

- Define outcome goals for improved student behavior
- Measure those goals based on data that is used for decision making
- Adopt an evidence-based curriculum along with other practices that create shared expectations
- Create a review team to design and enforce the PBIS process

Through this process, PBIS addresses social-emotional skills, including:

- **Self-management and self-awareness**, through the use of behavior interventions for select groups of students when needed, emphasizing student self-monitoring, and giving students tools with which to gain control over their own behavior
- **Social awareness and interpersonal skills** through a central focus, common among all PBIS programs, of creating positive behavior norms that seek to prevent student discipline problems
- **Self-efficacy**, through interventions that build students' confidence in being able to behave, as well as learning more strategies for better behavior

Restorative justice, also referred to as restorative practices, is a specific behavior intervention approach that is often part of a PBIS system. Its aim is to empower students to resolve conflicts on their own. Borrowing from an approach developed in the criminal justice setting, restorative practices are increasingly being used in California schools as an alternative to zero tolerance discipline approaches. The program content varies by district. These practices can support development of all six social-emotional skills by cultivating mutual respect and calling on students to take responsibility for their actions.

How should behavioral instruction be structured?

Proponents of the various specific approaches to addressing student behavior have leaned heavily on an instructional practice first developed within the world of special education called Response to Intervention (RTI). Today, this approach is more often referred to as the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS).

The basic premise of MTSS is that all students should receive the level of support they need to be successful, which is done by offering universal (Tier 1), targeted (Tier 2), and intensive (Tier 3) supports.

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- **Tier 1** support is primarily based on prevention, with a focus on consistency of practice and improving school climate generally. At this level, school-wide positive behavioral expectations and procedures are explicitly taught. This generally occurs as part of regular classroom instruction and the same terms and expectations are often incorporated into expanded learning programs as well.
- **Tier 2** is designed to provide interventions within the regular classroom environment that support students who are not responding to tier one prevention strategies. The goal is to help students develop stronger self-awareness, learn self-regulation strategies, and make it safe for them to choose to change their own behaviors.
- **Tier 3** intervention services are the most intensive level of intervention and are often provided as one-on-one services.

San Francisco Unified School District

Adoption of the District’s MTSS Strategy

ExCEL After School Programs is making sure that expanded learning leadership is conversant and comfortable with the same Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) that San Francisco Unified School District uses during the school day. As part of their annual process for building a Quality Action Plan, program leaders are expected to map their offerings to the MTSS structure in three program areas: *Safe and Supportive Culture and Climate*, *Healthy Active Youth*, and *Aligned Academic Support*. Shared terminology and a common understanding of student support processes help bridge the divide between the school day and after school.

Tier 3: Intensive Supports

Safe & Supportive School Culture & Climate: De-escalation plans

Healthy Active Youth: Meditation/relaxation techniques

Aligned Academic Support: Team meetings (parents/guardians, school day, after school)

Tier 2: Targeted supports

Safe & Supportive School Culture & Climate: Behavior charts

Healthy Active Youth: Girls running club

Aligned Academic Support: Reading Partners tutoring

Tier 1: Universal supports for all students

Safe & Supportive School Culture & Climate: Family engagement outreach

Healthy Active Youth: Structured yard activities

Aligned Academic Support: Sufficient supplies and resources for all students

Examples of San Francisco Unified School District’s adoption of MTSS strategy within three key program areas.

Expanded Learning Quality Standards: Practices defined by the quality standards are consistent with school day efforts

In 2001, the Community Network for Youth Development published a Youth Development Guide that described key experiences that need to be included in the learning environment in order for students to make progress toward social-emotional outcomes. Later, these were updated to the Learning in After School and Summer principles that are widely used in expanded learning programs across the state.³ These include:

- Learning should be active
- Learning should be collaborative
- Learning should be meaningful to the participants
- Learning should support mastery
- Learning should expand horizons

For more than 20 years, the expanded learning community has been implementing these youth development strategies through local efforts and the support of technical assistance providers. These principles informed the creation of the quality standards that the California Department of Education’s After School Division is using to guide publicly funded after school and summer programs. (For more information, refer to page 3.)

As described above, the state’s quality standards address specific aspects of effective practice that support a broad range of outcome goals for program participants. Rooted in a culture of positive support for students, these standards are particularly consistent with, and strategic for, the work around student behavior encompassed by PBIS and similar approaches, and support education and learning more broadly.

Given the field's commitment to youth development, the expanded learning community is particularly well-positioned to support school districts’ efforts to address social-emotional learning.

San Francisco Unified School District

Building a Program That Supports Social-Emotional Learning

At every after school program in San Francisco Unified School District, staff are expected to create a Quality Action Plan with explicit goals. The ExCEL After School Programs office provides guidance for exploring the current status of the program and working with the school principal to align with the school day.

For example, related to the program objective of having a Safe and Supportive Culture and Climate, the program staff is first reminded: “Positive behavior supports and a restorative framework help us to create respectful and supportive systems and policies.”

Guiding questions support the staff’s review of data and preparation for talking with the school principal. Then the staff is asked to identify, from a list of choices, the culture and climate goal they wish to put into their Quality Action Plan. They are also expected to flag which tier in the MTSS structure that strategy is best aligned with, describe the steps they will take to implement their chosen strategy, and list the resources they will allocate to it.

Finally, they predict the results that they expect; for example, students exhibiting new/ improved skills (growth mindset and self-efficacy) or developing strong relationships with peers and adults (social awareness).

³ These principles were developed by the Learning in Afterschool Project. These learning principles are strongly supported by recent brain research, after school research, and the growing science of learning.
Learning in Afterschool & Summer Principles: www.temescalassoc.com/db/lias/position-statement/

State Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF): Both school day and expanded learning programs support LCFF priorities

In California's new funding and accountability system, the LCFF, there are eight priority areas for which local school leaders must take responsibility. Many of the social-emotional skills described in this report are directly reflected in these priorities. The imperative to address these key areas creates an added incentive for school day and expanded learning staff to combine their efforts and multiply their impact related to social-emotional learning.

To meet several of the state priorities, everyone in a school needs to work together to create an environment that supports the development of social-emotional skills. The LCFF priorities that are most directly linked to social-emotional learning include the following:

- **School climate: self-awareness and self management**

Creating and maintaining the positive, safe atmosphere in which learning can occur requires students to be self-aware and able to manage their own behavior successfully.

- **Student engagement: self-efficacy, growth mindset, social awareness, and interpersonal skills**

When students' self-efficacy and growth mindset are nurtured, their attitudes toward school improve as they feel more successful. As a result, student attendance and dropout rates improve alongside positive attitudes toward school. Through social awareness and interpersonal skills, students experience an increased sense of belonging, which is also crucial for their engagement at school.

- **Student achievement: self-efficacy, growth mindset, and social-emotional learning overall**

Self-efficacy and growth mindset are necessary for students to make academic gains. When young people believe in their own capabilities and their ability to learn and succeed, they are more likely to meet academic goals and milestones. Additionally, evidence shows that when social-emotional learning is integrated into students' education, standardized test scores increase by an average of 11 to 17 points.⁴

- **Implementation of Common Core State Standards: social awareness, interpersonal skills, self-efficacy, self-awareness, and growth mindset**

As described in the [New K-12 Goals](#) section of this report, the Common Core State Standards have a number of social-emotional skills embedded in its documents, including social awareness, interpersonal skills, self-efficacy, self-awareness, and growth mindset.

Recognizing these connections, some districts have devoted a portion of LCFF funding to support after school and summer learning programs. These funds are being used in a variety of ways, including:

- Program expansion
- Stronger professional development for expanded learning staff
- Improving coordination between school day and expanded learning programs

⁴ Hurwitz, Laura; and Weston, Karen. *Using Coordinated School Health to Promote Mental Health for All Students*. National Assembly on School-Based Care. July 2010.

Continuous Improvement: School day and expanded learning use the same principles

The school day and expanded learning communities are each being held accountable for implementing continuous improvement processes that are quite similar. Goal setting, capacity building, and data analysis in cycles of continuous quality improvement thus represent a shared challenge as well as an opportunity.

For school day leaders, those expectations are codified in the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) process. The annual development of goals, action plans, and measurement indicators, accompanied by community engagement and sound resource management, is akin to the portion of the state Quality Standards for Expanded Learning that emphasize strong systems and structures. Those include:

- **Clear vision, mission and purpose:** The program has a clearly defined vision, mission, goals, and measurable outcomes that reflect broad stakeholder input and drive program design, implementation, and improvement.
- **Quality staff:** The program recruits and retains staff and volunteers who are focused on creating a positive learning environment, and provides ongoing professional development based on assessed staff needs.
- **Collaborative partnerships:** The program intentionally builds and supports collaborative relationships among internal and external stakeholders, including families, schools, and community, to achieve its goals.
- **Continuous quality improvement:** The program uses data from multiple sources to assess its strengths and weaknesses in order to continuously improve its design, outcomes, and impact.
- **Program management:** The program has sound fiscal and administrative practices supported by well-defined and documented policies and procedures that meet grant requirements.
- **Sustainability:** The program builds enduring partnerships with the community and secures commitments for in-kind and monetary contributions.

San Francisco Unified School District

Creating a Culture of Continuous Improvement

Through its Quality Action Plan (QAP) process, ExCEL After School Programs makes an explicit commitment to continuous improvement that is consistent with the overall district approach. The steps in the annual process include:

- **Planning with data** collected from multiple sources, including a self-assessment.
- **Establishing a QAP** using strategic goal setting, with site leaders and their teams agreeing on a priority goal in each of three program areas: *Safe and Supportive Culture and Climate*, *Healthy Active Youth*, and *Aligned Academic Support*.
- **Compliance reviews** to assure administrative systems are in place and operating appropriately.
- **Implementation of the QAP** by drawing on a variety of district resources for support.
- **Monitoring and assessing what's working** by completing a structured program walkthrough and a mid-year progress report.
- **Site team planning and reflection** to review progress and begin planning for the next year.

ExCEL has established a timeline for this process and provided a school profile, which includes data to measure the “direct positive benefits” and “other outcomes” articulated in the ExCEL Theory of Action. Site leaders are also provided with tools at each step, including questions to guide their reflection and planning. School site principals are expected to play an integral role on the site team.

Making the Connection

In a typical school classroom in California, a teacher tackles the challenges of nurturing and intentionally developing the social-emotional skills her students need to succeed in school, work, and life. Next door, the coordinator of the after school program is working to address these same challenges.

These two professionals have shared goals and they work with the same students. They also share increased pressure to continuously improve the quality of their work.

Yet in many schools, and many districts, the school day and expanded learning programs miss the opportunity to maximize their effectiveness by working together. With pressing daily responsibilities—and sometimes by force of habit—they operate in two separate spheres with distinct professional terminology.

A first step in changing this dynamic is to sit in the same room and communicate about goals and challenges. When this happens, the adults in the room win and so do the students they serve.

School district and program administrators have both an opportunity and a responsibility to make this communication possible and productive. They need to be clear about the expectation, make sure time is set aside, and provide support that will make these meetings into true opportunities for collaboration. They need to give their staff a shared vocabulary and promote mutual respect that will help them move forward together in ways that most benefit students.

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