Social *and* Emotional Learning *in* Out-of-School Time

FOUNDATIONS AND FUTURES

Elizabeth Devaney | Deborah A. Moroney

editors

Endorsements for *Social Emotional Learning and Out-of-School Time: Foundations and Futures*

The social and emotional development of our nation's youth is a common, essential concern of those working in school and out of school. This volume will be the catalyst for long overdue conversation, collaboration, and synergy. It is essential reading for practitioners, researchers, and policy makers in both contexts who are concerned with preparing children for the tests of life, and not a life of tests.

—Maurice J. Elias, PhD
Rutgers University, Co-Director of the Academy
for Social-Emotional Learning in Schools and After School Settings
(SELinSchools.org)

Social Emotional Learning and Out-of-School Time: Foundations and Futures is an extremely important and timely publication. The scope and depth of this work makes it a must read for any serious Out-of-School Time or K–12 educator. In 2014 California identified social emotional learning as the most promising bridge to bring coherence between expanded learning programs and the school day. (*A Vision for Expanded Learning in California—Strategic Plan 2014–2016*) I have found this to be the exact case. All across California, school day and Out-of-School Time professionals are having deep and authentic conversations about youth-centered collaborative efforts. We also know that providing social emotional development opportunities is a cornerstone for any high quality Out-of-School Time program. I plan to share this publication widely with K–12 educators, policy makers, parents, and so many others.

—Michael Funk, Director
Expanded Learning Division
California Department of Education

Youth thriving rests on the development of life skills and on using these skills to contribute positively to self and society. Out-of-School Time (OST) programs that enhance social and emotional learning (SEL) are key foundations of such positive youth development for millions of young people across the nation. Elizabeth Devaney and Deborah Moroney have brought together researchers, practitioners, and policy makers in a timely and singularly important volume that creatively and convincingly integrates the knowledge base documenting the linkages between OST programs and SEL and, as well, provides a compelling vision for advancing research and evaluation, improving program quality, and creating policies promoting youth thriving through scaling and sustaining effective OST–SEL relations. This book is required reading for all people seeking resources for enhancing the well-being of the diverse young people of our nation.

—Richard M. Lerner
Bergstrom Chair in Applied Developmental Science and Director
Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development
Tufts University

As someone who has helped shape and define out-of-school time as a field—which has standards of practice, a credible evidence-base, workforce and leadership development, leadership and grassroots advocacy, and systemic supports—I am proud to see this volume push the field to more intentionally articulate the work we already do to support the whole child. While the book's title clearly indicates its focus on SEL practice in OST programs, two statements made in the Foreword and Closing Commentary remind us to liberate ourselves from talking about SEL in the context of specific settings and, instead, focus on how learning happens in those settings. In the Foreword, Mahoney and Weissberg encourage us to shift our attention from which setting is best for SEL, and instead examine how different settings can work together to best implement SEL. This calls for a more nuanced examination of when and where SEL happens, to consider the formal and informal learning settings even within schools where SEL can be named, taught, and practiced. One only has to spend 10 minutes on a playground to see children and youth practicing their SEL skills. Similarly, in the Closing Commentary, Pittman reminds us, based on lessons from the U.K., that youth work is "setting and activity neutral." It meets young people where they are and the "specific activities are merely a medium through which the experience which leads to personal and social development is offered." This suggests that even within the OST sector, settings vary greatly, and Section II on Research-Informed SEL Practice helps us get to that more nuanced understanding of SEL and settings, even within the OST sector. Together, the two statements are a reminder to place youth in the center of what we do and surround them with a variety of settings that support SEL in- and out-of-school.

—Priscilla M. Little, Consultant

As a leader in a nonprofit that cares deeply about supporting young people's social, emotional and academic development, I'm excited to see a book that comprehensively explores the many contributions of out-of-school time programs. This volume has much to offer—from making sense of the various SEL frameworks and how they intersect with youth development to offering practical approaches for improving practices and policies. OST programs provide a unique space to nurture the development of skills, mindsets and capacities that support healthy development and academic success. As a field, our capacity to support SEL has grown significantly over the past several years, building off of our history in positive youth development. We've become more intentional in our approaches to building SEL skills, more sophisticated in elevating youth voice, and better at investing in the adults that work with young people to hone their own social and emotional skills. I hope this book will spark additional interest in SEL and be a catalyst for schools and OST providers to work collaboratively across systems in service to youth.

—Brenda McLaughlin, Chief Strategy Officer
Building Educated Leaders for Life

Whenever two previously separate fields begin to interact and potentially start to merge—as is happening today with OST and SEL—it is a moment of both promise and peril. The best ideas and practices from each field might be combined into a

coherent new approach that produces both improvement and innovation. Alternatively, the strengths of both fields might be diluted or lost altogether amidst a confusing and often contradictory jumble of terms, frameworks, and practices. This volume is an invaluable resource for practitioners, researchers, funders and others who want the interaction of OST and SEL to take the first rather than the second path forward. From a diverse array of perspectives, the authors demonstrate that with clear thinking and clear language, the merger of SEL and OST can result in a whole that is even greater than the sum of its two powerful parts.

—Kent Pekel, EdD, President and CEO
Search Institute

This volume's authors—a veritable "Who's Who" of individuals in the youth work profession/youth development field—have been thoughtful trailblazers for many years, so it's no surprise their collection of essays provides a practical, multifaceted view. Ever since Robert Halpern's seminal "Confronting 'The Big Lie': The Need to Reframe Expectations of After-School Programs," we, in the field, have been working to articulate what we do and what we should be held accountable to when given needed support for planning and professional development. Throughout, and especially in Karen Pittman's concluding exhortation to focus on the "what and how," this volume renews our focus and drive to achieve greater intentionality in our practice. Well-constructed and comprehensive, this publication rightly directs our attention to the importance of engaging in data-informed and child-centered continuous improvement processes. Our focus on SEL must include skill building through hands-on group learning—and through reflective developmental experiences both for the children we work with and for ourselves as well, as models and co-learners standing shoulder-to-shoulder with young people.

—Dara Rose, Senior VP, Strategies & Program
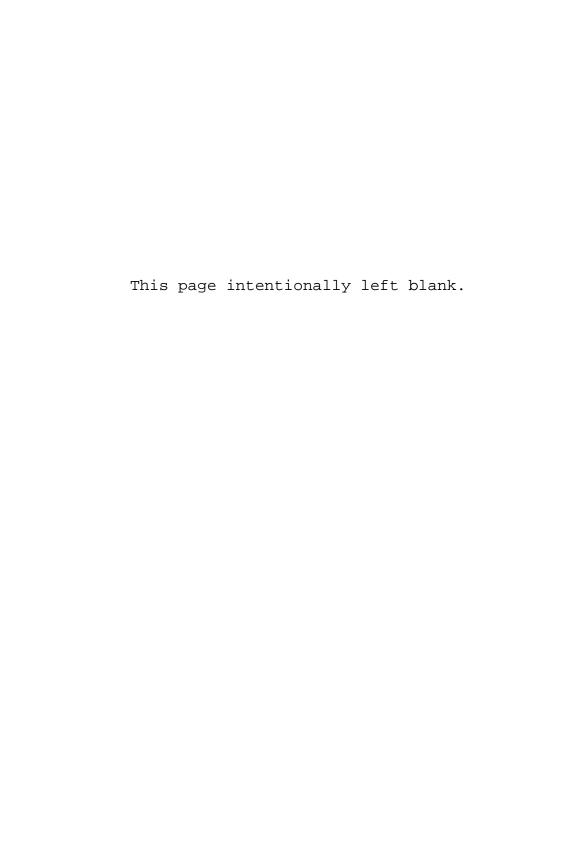HORIZONS NATIONAL

Having spent all of my adult life working with, and advocating for, high-quality youth programming, I understand the critical role Out-of-School Time (OST) programs play in the social and emotional development of young people. As the Executive Director of the New York State Network for Youth Success, *I am thrilled to see such a comprehensive view of current best practices and research on social-emotional learning (SEL) in OST programs.* It is exciting and encouraging to see so much documented progress with SEL in OST condensed into one comprehensive book that furthers understanding of both research-informed practices and systems building around policy. This book, edited by two leading researchers in the field, Elizabeth Devaney and Deborah Moroney, should be required reading for any practitioners, policy makers, and educators in the field. Both the editors' and contributors' emphasis on making SEL an "intentional practice" is the exact conversation we all should be having right now.

—Kelly Malone Sturgis, Executive Director
New York State Network for Youth Success

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Social and Emotional Learning in Out-of-School Time

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Social and Emotional Learning in Out-of-School Time

Foundations and Futures

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Dedicated to all the frontline staff who have devoted their lives
to working with and for young people and
to the American Educational Research Association Out-of-School Time
Special Interest Group

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CONTENTS

SECTION III

SEL SYSTEMS AND POLICY

SECTION IV

SEL RESEARCH, MEASUREMENT, AND ASSESSMENT

SECTION V

CONCLUSION

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SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL BENEFITS YOUNG PEOPLE

Joseph L. Mahoney and Roger P. Weissberg

Over a decade ago, our colleagues undertook a review of research on social and emotional learning (SEL) programs (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010). Initially, one goal of the review was to include evaluations carried out in school and in out-of-school settings to understand the combined effects of SEL across these contexts. There was particular interest in SAFE programs with (a) *sequenced* step-by-step training, (b) *active* forms of learning, (c) a *focus* on social and emotional skill development, and (d) *explicit* SEL goals. However, an insufficient number of studies examining SEL across the settings made it impossible to assess their combined impact. As a result, two separate reports were published: one on school-based SEL (Durlak et al., 2011) and the other on out-of-school SEL (Durlak et al., 2010). This volume shows that since these reports were released, great progress has been made with respect to how programming and systems support SEL across learning contexts.

It is an exciting time for SEL, following a surge of interest in recent decades (Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Gullota, 2015). Educators show strong support for SEL (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013; DePaoli, Atwell, & Bridgeland, 2017), and school and out-of-school settings alike are implementing SEL programs and practices around the world. Hundreds of research studies with rigorous designs conducted within and outside the United States on a variety of SEL programs reach the same general conclusion—namely, that these programs produce positive benefits for participating youth on a range of important outcomes (Mahoney, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2018). SEL is also cost-effective (Belfield et al., 2015), and federal, state, and local policymakers are backing the SEL movement with increased funding (Goldberg, Sharvit, & Singh, this volume; Price, 2015). The National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development was recently formed with the purpose of engaging communities to "...fully integrate the social, emotional, and academic dimension of learning in K–12 education so that all students are prepared to thrive in school, career, and in life" (The Aspen Institute, 2017, p. 1). Finally, the Assessment Work Group is a new partnership between the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the RAND Corporation, Harvard University, the CORE Districts, Transforming Education, and XSEL Labs to establish practical social and emotional competence assessments of preschool to high school youth in and out of school ("Assessment Work Group," n.d.).

OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME SETTINGS AS CONTEXTS FOR SEL

In an expanding field characterized by numerous frameworks and terms (Berg et al., 2017), it is important to define what is meant by SEL. We define SEL as the processes by which children and adults:

> ...acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can enhance personal development, establish satisfying interpersonal relationships, and lead to effective and ethical work and productivity. These include the competencies to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show caring and concern for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. (Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015, p. 6)

In the context of a growing SEL movement, this volume makes a major contribution to the field. The chapters show the important role out-of-school time (OST) plays in developing social and emotional competencies for all young people and highlights that OST has much to offer the future of the SEL field. At the same time, the volume represents a timely

opportunity for the OST community to take advantage of the collective knowledge available on SEL.

As a starting point, the chapters in this volume contribute to our understanding of a broad and modern view of education. The volume makes it clear that OST staff understand the important role of SEL in children's development. Indeed, OST providers have historically maintained a broad view of education as a way to help young people navigate their social environment and actively develop the skills needed to function successfully in a multicultural and changing world (e.g., Section I of this volume, "SEL in OST: Background and Frameworks"; Blyth, Chapter 2, this volume; Devaney & Moroney, Chapter 1, this volume). Adults in OST and school settings agree that these skills are needed for young people to be successful in school, college, career, and in life.

It is also important to note that SEL is a field anchored by strong research. Several of the chapters show that OST settings are important contexts for SEL by expanding and applying this scientific knowledge base (e.g., Section II of this volume, "Research-Informed SEL Practice"; Noam, Allen, & Triggs, Chapter 14, this volume). OST's historic emphasis on positive youth development (PYD), where all young people are viewed as assets to be nurtured, fits well with the goals of SEL (e.g., Devaney & Moroney, Chapter 1, this volume; Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017). Specifically, the focus on whole-child development, fostering strengths such as character, citizenship, and positive cultural identity, supportive relationships, and equitable learning opportunities cultivated through active and experiential learning make OST programs well suited for promoting SEL. As Blyth (Chapter 2, this volume) notes, both youth development and SEL programming enhance the competence of young people so they are better able to manage themselves, engage in constructive relationships, and contribute responsibly to society.

However, as the field of SEL expands across OST and other settings, it is critical that a systemic approach be taken to provide intentionally aligned and coherent SEL practices across contexts. Elsewhere we have described systemic SEL as a multi-layered system of programming and relationships that fosters and integrates SEL synergistically across contexts and over time. These conditions are enhanced through the use and continuous improvement of evidence-based practices that actively involve all youth, reinforce social and emotional competencies, and create equitable learning opportunities across school, family, and community settings (Mahoney, Weissberg, et al., 2018).

From a systemic view, partnerships and relationships are at the core of effective SEL. A shared focus on SEL opens up a point of communication and collaboration in, for example, a school–community partnership. Aligning goals, strategies, and practices across settings also helps to avoid fragmented or even contradictory experiences that can diminish efforts to foster social and emotional competence. As such, attention should not be focused

on which setting is best for SEL, but rather how different settings can work together to best implement SEL (see, for example, Brohawn and Traill [Chapter 7, this volume] on the ExpandED Schools partnership model).

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FIELD

This volume describes several important challenges and opportunities for the field of SEL. Next we comment on four of these areas. Our insights reflect learnings from this volume, past research and practical experience in the field, and ongoing collaboration in the Partnership for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative (PSELI), supported by the Wallace Foundation ("Social and Emotional Learning," 2018).

1. *SEL goals are in line with the PYD perspective, but the approaches to learning and skill development in OST and school settings are often different.* OST settings do not have the constraints of a time-consuming school curriculum, and youth often participate on a voluntary basis. As a result, a youth-centered approach to programming that emphasizes informal learning processes has been common. This approach emphasizes learning through social interaction and relationships that take place in the context of active and experiential learning projects and activities. In contrast, schools more often foster SEL intentionally through explicit instruction and more broadly through academic instruction and improvements in climate and culture.

   The different approaches to learning in OST programs and schools need not be points of contention or conflict. In fact, a key challenge and opportunity for the field involves establishing coordinated OST and school programming. Each setting has a great deal to offer the other, and the complementary nature of these settings represents an opportunity for connection and collaboration to improve the lives of all young people through SEL programs and practices. However, this requires that staff in the two settings understand, respect, and support their different approaches to learning and development (e.g., Brohawn & Traill, Chapter 7, this volume). Joint professional development and programming—with school and OST staff working side by side—may provide opportunities for schools and OST programs to align practices around common goals in ways that produce more positive outcomes for young people. It may also provide opportunities for OST and school staff to discuss shared data; learn from each other, and about each young person's strengths and needs across contexts; and support each other's efforts to continuously improve. From a systemic

perspective, an aligned and collaborative partnership guided by a shared vision, common language, and common emphases for SEL will support implementation and achieve developmental outcomes most effectively (CASEL, 2017).

2. *Regardless of context, SEL programs and practices need to be intentional to be fully effective.* Historically, OST settings have maintained a focus on developing and improving high-quality programming at the point of service by creating safe, supportive, and productive environments where youth can thrive (e.g., Smith et al., 2016). High-quality OST settings are, in turn, linked to positive developmental outcomes for young people (e.g., Vandell, Larson, Mahoney, & Watts, 2015).

   However, a focus on PYD and point-of-service quality may not be intentional about SEL (Devaney & Moroney, Chapter 1, this volume), and being intentional is critical to program effectiveness (Blyth, Chapter 2, this volume). For example, a meta-analysis of OST programs and SEL (Durlak et al., 2010) found that only SAFE programs with a combination of sequenced and developmentally appropriate activities, opportunities for active learning and feedback, and a focused and explicit effort to promote SEL were associated with significant improvements in self-perceptions and bonding to school, positive social behaviors, school grades, and levels of academic achievement, and with significant reductions in problem behaviors. Chapters in Section III of this volume, "SEL Systems and Policy," describe an evolution in some of our large OST systems from a focus on quality programming, *per se*, to quality with explicit efforts to foster social and emotional skills in youth and in adults.

3. *To have a consistent and coherent approach to SEL, evidence-based programs and practices should be used and aligned across settings.* Several chapters in Section II describe a growing awareness that developing social and emotional competence in OST settings requires a clear and consistent language of SEL and a corresponding set of evidence-based practices (e.g., Brackenridge, Chapter 11, this volume). There are relatively few evidence-based SEL programs designed specifically for OST settings (Jones et al., 2017). SEL programs can and have been carried out effectively in OST settings (e.g., Laird, Logan, & Meste, this volume), but they may be less common due to the more informal and project-based approach to learning in OST settings, the diversity of OST program types, and the fact that school-based SEL programs have received greater attention from researchers. It may also be that OST practitioners have viewed youth development as a proxy for SEL and so believe they are already carrying out this work. In addition, finding the resources to implement developmentally appropriate curricula and professional develop-

ment for school-based SEL programs may be challenging for OST settings. For example, OST programs often serve a broad age range of youth simultaneously with variable attendance patterns. They also tend to experience high rates of staff turnover and may operate with modest budgets. Given these challenges, some OST settings may benefit from a flexible set of evidence-based practices.

To that end, other evidence-based approaches have been used in OST contexts to promote SEL. For example, several of the chapters in Section II discuss the Weikart Center's model for continuous quality improvement at the point of service (Smith et al., 2012). Likewise, in the PSELI, some OST programs are using a version of the Weikart Center's Youth Program Quality Assessment tool that includes strategies designed to support SEL (e.g., Bednar et al., this volume; Smith et al., 2016).

4. *SEL programs and practices require professional development for adults.* Many of the chapters in this volume underscore the need for adults who interact with children to have social and emotional skills that permit them to effectively communicate, teach, and model the competencies they want children to develop. However, some OST staff may lack social and emotional competence themselves, the knowledge and skills needed to foster SEL in their youth, or both.

Like some school-day teachers (Schonert-Reichl, Kitil, & Hanson-Peterson, 2017), OST staff often do not receive regular opportunities for the SEL-focused professional development (PD) needed to foster adult social and emotional competence. Unlike school-day teachers, there is no national credentialing system of education and training for OST staff (Mahoney & Warner, 2014). Existing approaches to PD in OST settings must also account for staff turnover, a part-time workforce, and variable youth attendance. Despite some of these barriers, chapters in this volume describe approaches to SEL-focused PD and professional learning communities for the OST workforce (e.g., Brackenridge, Chapter 11, this volume; Brohawn & Traill, Chapter 7, this volume). In this work, efforts to use shared data to guide the PD and continuously improve programming are critical (e.g., Noam, Allen, & Triggs, Chapter 14, this volume).

The chapters in this volume emphasize that effective partnerships, relationships, and intentional competence-enhancement efforts are at the heart of well-implemented, effective, and sustained SEL. Best research and practice suggests that these are critical components to benefit young people. This volume lays the groundwork for critical research, practice, and policy directions to establish beneficial, coordinated, and intentional SEL efforts across OST settings, whether partnered with schools or as

stand-alone programs. These programs can provide young people with the opportunities they need today to become healthy and productive adult citizens who contribute positively to the world of tomorrow.

—Joseph L. Mahoney
Senior Research Scientist

—Roger P. Weissberg
Chief Knowledge Officer,
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

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SECTION I

SEL IN OST: BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORKS

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FOCUSING AND FRAMING SEL IN OST

An Introduction to the Volume

Elizabeth Devaney and Deborah Moroney

This is an exciting time for the out-of-school time (OST) field. It seems like everywhere you turn, school staff, community leaders, physical and mental health service providers—and even, dare we say it, some politicians—are talking about the importance of the very skills OST has been championing for decades. Rather than having to make the case for how we support academic achievement, we are now in a position to communicate how we can contribute to, and even lead, efforts to support social and emotional learning (SEL). All of a sudden, the world has finally realized that in order for our children (and, quite frankly, our adults) to thrive, and for our society to function, we need to be able to take on other perspectives, rather than dismissing them, when someone has a different point of view. We need to be able to identify our hot buttons and use strategies to manage them. We need to be able to communicate, work in teams, set goals, manage our time, and pick ourselves up when we fail. This is not new information for many

of us who have been working to support the development of these skills in young people for many years. Nonetheless, we have work to do, both to build upon our strong history of supporting youth development, and to share our story so we can be leaders in the SEL movement.

We chose to bring together the narratives in this volume precisely because of this growing SEL movement. While it is, in many ways, a good thing that SEL has begun to receive the attention it deserves, drawing both focus and funding to such an important body of work, there is also a downside. We see a danger that SEL will be perceived as simply the latest trend in education—something that could disappear at the whim of key leaders, rather than something that is foundational and historically embedded in the work of high-quality educators and youth workers. As we have written about elsewhere (Devaney & Moroney, 2017; Moroney & Devaney, 2017), the OST field was founded on a youth development approach that focuses on creating environments where youth can be the drivers of their own development and success. We believe it is essential to have a conversation about how SEL fits within that youth development philosophy. In particular, it is essential to understand what lessons we can draw from more than two decades of research and practice in creating positive environments for youth that contribute to their overall development, and how that can translate into high-quality SEL. This book is an opportunity to do just that—to reexamine, reframe, reenergize, and perhaps remind those both in and out of the field that OST is deeply rooted in practices that promote SEL.

FRAMEWORKS AND DEFINITIONS

We are often asked to help sort out the various definitions and frameworks related to SEL in OST, such as 21st-century competencies, grit, growth mindsets, noncognitive factors, character, foundations for young adult success, and so on. We wanted to share some of that thinking before readers dive into the chapters that explore or exemplify these issues more deeply.

In the OST field, there have historically been two approaches to defining the skills and competencies that OST programs promote and foster. One approach has been for researchers and thought leaders to study, frame, and define skills and competencies in a way that is accessible to practitioners and researchers, so they can find a conceptualization that fits their mission and vision for how to support positive development. The value in using one of these frameworks is that the developers have taken the time and care to ensure the skills and competencies are clearly defined, grounded in research, and malleable through practice. There is also some benefit to a field sharing a common framework for communication, workforce mobility, and general field consistency. Finally, there is a practical efficiency in picking

something that already exists, in order to avoid wasting valuable resources on a framework development process.

A second approach has been for systems and programs to develop and fine-tune their own, localized skills framework, often based on the nationally developed versions. There are quite a few examples of this approach in this volume. There are also benefits to this approach. Bringing stakeholders together to sort through skills and competencies and determine their value in a local context and program vision builds engagement and buy in. This approach works best when locally grown framework developers take some time to crosswalk their framework with an established one (e.g., CASEL's framework) to check that the skills they have identified in their framework are grounded in research, clearly and accurately defined, and malleable. Regardless of the approach, frameworks are important because they are fundamentally communication vehicles for system-building efforts and have great value in that role.

We are not the only ones thinking about these issues. One of the authors in this volume, Dale Blyth, is leading an effort to sort through the frameworks dilemma as part of a national SEL Assessment Workgroup led by CASEL (Blyth & Borowski, 2018). In addition, our colleagues at American Institutes for Research (AIR), Juliette Berg and David Osher, explored over 130 social and emotional competency frameworks from across multiple fields of study and made some important contributions about where there is overlap and where there are some pretty significant gaps in how we are thinking about skill building (Berg et al., 2017). This study highlights just how complicated it can be to identify key skills to focus on, choose a framework, and communicate to and gain buy in from key stakeholders across a community.

Perhaps controversially, we are not in the camp that believes the field as a whole needs one framework. Although that would be convenient for clarity, it would take away significantly from the various ways in which OST practitioners, programs, and systems get to the SEL table. In addition, trying to reach common agreement about a framework can sometimes paralyze the work, and can even build siloes as people become focused on defending their specific framework to the detriment of finding common ground. However, we do share the belief that a program or system of programs will benefit from a framework for visioning, communication, and ideally, implementation.

You can see by the framing of this volume that we chose to use the term SEL to talk about the *process* of social and emotional skill building, and that we talk about social and emotional skills or competencies as the *outcomes* of that process. We based our framing and presentation on the recent Wallace Foundation-funded study that found the term SEL to be the most widely used and accessible, and on our own experience that it is being widely used

in practice (Loeb, Tipton, & Wagner, 2016). We are not dismissing the many other valid framings, and we hope you see a variety of approaches depicted in this volume. Ultimately, what we are talking about is skill building—creating environments that allow young people to develop core skills they need to be successful in life. The work Stephanie Jones and colleagues are doing around kernels of practice will help us achieve this goal (Kahn, Brush, & Bailey, 2017). In fact, it is an essential next step if we are to be successful.

The second big question we get asked is how SEL relates to youth development. In Chapter 2, Dale Blyth gives his take on SEL and youth development, along with some background on the development of the field. He describes what he sees as the differences between SEL and youth development and discusses how OST programs may need to reconcile those differences in order to do both well.

We have also done a bit of writing and thinking on this (e.g., Devaney & Moroney, 2017; Moroney & Devaney, 2017) and we share our perspective here. A youth development approach fosters a safe and supportive environment, where relationships can flourish and youth can engage in learning experiences of all kinds (e.g., science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, or STEM; SEL; arts) to explore their interests. These are the absolute foundations of a high-quality youth development program. Many of the practices that OST providers employ in implementing high-quality youth development programs promote social and emotional skill building. For example, much of the STEM programming in OST settings requires hands-on exploration and problem solving in small groups. When done well, these types of activities allow young people to develop relationship- and team-building skills, promote critical thinking, and foster problem solving (Moroney & Devaney, 2017). There are dozens of examples like this of how SEL is perhaps *unintentionally* happening in OST programs through high-quality youth development practice.

Going forward as a field, we believe we need to make SEL an *intentional practice* built into high-quality youth development programs to support participants' social and emotional skill building. This could take the form of intentional SEL instruction, the same way we would recommend building STEM or arts into a high-quality youth development program. Alternatively, it could take the form of embedded SEL practices, infused throughout any content. OST programs can weave in both approaches to intentionally include SEL in their offerings. In fact, OST programs are especially well poised to foster SEL (and many already do) because high-quality OST environments are built to support youth development. However, we want to ensure that OST systems acknowledge that in order for their staff to intentionally foster SEL, they will have to invest in staff preparation. Many of the chapters in this volume present innovative strategies for supporting

staff in implementing SEL in high-quality OST programs that take a youth development approach.

OVERVIEW OF THE VOLUME

This volume was designed to intentionally address the issues we raise in this introduction from a variety of perspectives. There are chapters written by practitioners, policymakers, and researchers. By large city-system builders and individual program leaders. By veterans in the OST field and those who are newly minted. By those serving preschool children through high school-age youth. By those in small and large cities on each coast and in the middle of the country. By those who are leading large grant-making initiatives and those who are working on their own. Because the authors and what they write about are so varied, so too is the tone, style, and information each chapter contains. Rather than try to correct this, we have opted to allow this diversity of tone and style to serve as a reminder of—and tribute to—the variety and diversity of the OST field. The breadth and variety of the book is designed to highlight how widespread SEL is in OST, and how the approaches and even intended outcomes vary, while still driving toward the same result: improved social and emotional development for success in school, work, and life.

The book is divided into four sections. The first section serves as an introduction, discussing the founding of the OST field and how it has shifted to embrace an SEL lens that is grounded deeply in its youth development roots. The next three sections address SEL practice, policy, and research in the OST field. Readers will find on-the-ground stories about how individual programs and systems alike have incorporated SEL strategies. They will also get a bigger picture perspective on how SEL and OST align with other movements like college and career readiness, school-based SEL, and quality improvement. Finally, readers will find chapters that touch on how OST is tackling the sticky question of how to measure our success in building young people's social and emotional skills.

Section I: SEL in OST—Background and Frameworks

In the second chapter of the introductory section, Dale Blyth takes us through the foundations of the OST field, highlighting the evolution of SEL in OST from skills that were primarily "caught" through effective instruction and well-facilitated programs to skills that are now intentionally "taught." He talks about the importance of both approaches and offers a framework for how OST programs might think about this caught/taught

distinction. We hope readers take from this section a grounding in youth development, an understanding of how SEL is evolving in our field, and some new (and potentially boundary-pushing) ways to think about the intersection of positive youth development and SEL.

Section II: Research-Informed SEL Practice

In Section II, leaders from five OST programs and systems share how they are approaching SEL implementation. Each chapter offers a slightly different perspective. Leaders from the Greater Rochester After-School Alliance and WINGS for Kids talk about the youngest children, focusing on how they have built SEL programming for elementary youth, including prekindergarten youth. In Rochester, the SEL work has evolved organically out of the city's intensive quality improvement system. At WINGS, SEL has always been an intentional focus from the day the program opened its doors. Next, the Providence After School Alliance and Boston After School & Beyond describe how SEL has become a core component of their summer learning programs for middle school youth. They explore how SEL and STEM are intertwined and the importance of hands-on learning to both STEM and social and emotional skill development. Leaders from After School Matters in Chicago then discuss their high school system and how they see SEL as an important aspect of their work to help high school youth discover and practice their interests in preparation for the future. To round out the age spectrum, the next chapter turns to college and career pathways and discusses how the American Youth Policy Forum and others have envisioned SEL as a component of preparing youth for their postsecondary lives. Finally, in the last chapter in this section, ExpandED Schools shares the evolution of its model, which pairs schools and community partners for a full day of learning, using SEL as a key strategy to build common language and strategies among school-day and OST staff. Readers should finish this section feeling energized by the wide variety of approaches OST programs and systems are using to implement SEL, and struck by the common themes that emerge despite their variety of approaches. Most notably, we think readers will see SEL as both embedded in and evolving out of quality improvement initiatives.

Section III: SEL Systems and Policy

Section III moves from practice to systems change and policy development. In this section, both system and policy are defined broadly. That is, we look at both citywide and statewide systems, as well as capacity building

and funding networks. Likewise, the policy discussions include both federal and state political contexts, but also look at how we approach and think about cross-sector collaboration, systemic changes that influence practice, and key influences on policy at all levels. The first chapter in Section III describes how the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) has developed a common framework that successfully incorporates SEL while honoring DYCD's core values of youth development and youth leadership. The framework has provided an umbrella under which all of DYCD's programming, professional development, and evaluation efforts can be organized. The next chapter focuses on how the Connecticut Afterschool Network has incorporated SEL into its statewide efforts to drive quality improvement and professional development and gives examples and perspective on other statewide after-school networks grappling with this work. Next, the Partnership for Children and Youth describes a technical assistance system they built (360°/365°) to provide supports for staff on a variety of topics, including SEL. They share how they used professional learning communities as the catalyst for in-school and OST professionals to share effective SEL practices. The Afterschool Alliance discusses opportunities and challenges for SEL in OST from a policy perspective and examines how federal and state policies facilitate the implementation of SEL in OST. Finally, funders from Grantmakers for Thriving Youth share their interest in promoting collaboration across the school day and OST to successfully support social and emotional skill development, as well as lessons learned from their work to date. We hope that readers will come away from this section with a better understanding of how SEL fits into the larger context of citywide and statewide OST systems, as well as core policy developments and professional development efforts that are leading to greater connections between in-school and OST practitioners.

Section IV: SEL Research, Measurement, and Assessment

The last section in the book focuses on measurement—specifically, how the OST field is grappling with the key questions of how to assess and measure our success in supporting social and emotional skill building in OST programs. The section looks first at measurement of adult outcomes (i.e., improved instructional practices) through a description of the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality's work over the past decade and beyond. We then turn to measurement of youth outcomes (i.e., improved social and emotional competencies), with a chapter from the Youth Development Executives of King County and AIR, which have collectively developed an assessment process for measuring social and emotional competencies in older youth. Finally, leaders from the Program in Education,

Afterschool and Resiliency (PEAR) discuss a systems approach to measurement that looks at the uses of assessment data and discusses how to create a comprehensive measurement system that promotes continuous improvement, helps to understand individual youth, and examines summative outcomes. We hope readers walk away from this section able to ponder some of the key questions in determining whether and how to assess SEL practice and participants' social and emotional competencies, and knowing more about existing tools, methods, and resources for employing measurement strategies in support of continuous quality improvement and improved youth outcomes. This section barely scratches the surface of this big and important topic in the SEL field, and we recognize that many others are thinking and writing about assessment. For example, as noted earlier, CASEL is leading a national work group on the topic (see measuringsel.casel. org) and AIR has created the *Ready to Assess* suite of tools to help practitioners determine how and when to begin assessing social and emotional skills (Moroney & McGarrah, 2015).

The volume ends with a conclusion from Karen Pittman that serves as both a summative statement and a charge for the field as we look to the future. In this closing, Pittman encourages us to learn from other fields and disciplines but also demonstrate and own what OST practitioners do well by defining the "what" and "how" of our work.

Core Themes of the Volume

As noted earlier, one of the key reasons for developing this volume was to capture and synthesize what SEL looks like in OST, and how it might differ from SEL in formal settings. We knew that programs and systems across the country had begun this work and were grappling with how to define, shape, implement, and measure their SEL approaches as the rest of the country caught up with the importance of SEL as a foundation for youth success. We have talked to colleagues, heard presentations, and been involved in various projects across the country. We weren't exactly sure what we would learn as we developed this volume, but when we read through the chapters as they began to come in, we observed that most chapters emphasized the importance of adult SEL as a precursor to being effective in implementing SEL practices and programs with youth. We think this is an important contribution and likely key to the success of local SEL efforts. For the most part, the chapter authors emphasize a strengths-based (as opposed to deficit-based) approach in their SEL efforts. This is congruent with the youth development movement we discuss earlier and also cornerstone to high quality, universal SEL. In the following section we describe five core themes that clearly emerged for how SEL has evolved in the OST field. We discuss

each below briefly and then offer, in a limitations section, some key ideas that did not end up as central to the volume.

- *Focusing on social and emotional skill development is good for everyone.* Although OST programs have been fostering social and emotional skill building through high-quality programming for years, those outcomes have been hard to define. For at least the past decade, OST programs have set aside those goals and spent more staff and leadership time understanding, defining, and thinking about how their programs support academic achievement and success in school. The argument has often gone something like this: OST programs that use high-quality youth development practices stimulate youth interest, engage youth more in learning, promote curiosity, perhaps build confidence and a sense of efficacy, and therefore, improve academic achievement. By necessity, this emphasis on academic outcomes has meant that programs were not thinking about, or spending time improving, how they supported social and emotional outcomes. That has now changed. The research clearly shows that social and emotional competencies are critical for success in life. By incorporating SEL into OST more intentionally, we are now building opportunities for youth to develop skills that will serve them well across the developmental pathway and especially as they move into college and career, and that's good for young people.
- *The field's foundation in youth development has made SEL a natural fit.* For most OST practitioners, SEL has been an easy sell. Unlike school-day staff, who may feel that SEL is a new or unexpected part of their job, most OST practitioners are relieved to finally be able to acknowledge that the development of social and emotional skills is not only an acceptable side effect of high-quality programming, but a legitimate and important outcome in and of itself.
- *SEL is widely supported and provides opportunities for alignment between sectors.* Supporters of education and OST, including funders, policymakers, intermediaries, and capacity-building organizations, have an emerging but clear agenda to ensure that all children and youth have opportunities for SEL in school and in OST. There are now multiple initiatives across the country at the local and national level—several of which are shared in this book—that are building bridges between schools/school systems and OST using SEL as a catalyst. This shared vision for positive development and common language provides the opportunity for professionals across sectors (education, workforce, OST, mental health, to name a few) to create a common agenda and mechanisms to coordinate on behalf of children and families.

- *OST builds young people's social and emotional competencies through experiential learning and practices.* The practice chapters clearly show that OST practitioners to date have been more likely to use instructional practices than to implement specific SEL programs or curricula. In many cases, this has evolved out of the OST field's preference for hands-on learning that takes place through play, exploration, high-interest activities, and practical applications of academic content. A few programs (e.g., ExpandED Schools) have begun to explore implementation of evidence-based SEL programs (e.g., Second Step). In most cases, however, this is because of a partnership with a school where SEL curricula may be valued over instructional practices.

- *SEL practices have been honed through quality improvement initiatives.* In many cases, the evidence-based practices that most practitioners appear to be using to foster social and emotional skill development have emerged organically out of quality improvement initiatives. Almost all of the practice and several of the systems chapters touch in one way or another on the evolution from quality improvement efforts focused on intentional, high-quality youth development practices to SEL efforts focused on intentional, high-quality SEL instruction. There is a natural connection here, in that many of the practices these quality improvement systems promote are also strategies and practices that can promote social and emotional skill building. In fact, Chapter 15 tackles this subject head on by describing how the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality studied SEL instructional practices in OST, connected them to their program quality assessments, and have now created a new observational assessment focused on the intersection between quality and SEL.

- *The focus on SEL has started to shift practice.* This change in emphasis to more intentionally focus on SEL practice and measure social and emotional outcomes is leading to changes in how OST programs and providers approach skill building. Rather than focusing solely on academics (knowing that social and emotional skill building was happening as a side effect), practitioners are now intentionally building strategies into their programs that foster these skills. They are also measuring how well those strategies appear to be working by looking at improvements in social and emotional competencies in youth participants. At the same time, OST systems are fostering intentional capacity-building efforts around SEL. And yet, despite all of these new efforts and the intentional focus on SEL, it is clear from reading the chapters in this volume that, ultimately, SEL in OST still comes from a foundation in positive youth development practice and the creation of high-quality environments and opportunities.

Limitations

As we have described, the volume is rich with important information on the state of SEL in OST, but it is only a first step in the conversation toward supporting all young people in their social and emotional development, both in schools and in OST settings. We acknowledge the presentation of SEL practices in this volume focus primarily at the systems and program level and on the adults who work within them. This was intentional in order to capture the big picture and core themes for how SEL is emerging in OST programs across the country. But we recognize that because of that choice, youth voice is not represented in this sea of adult perspectives on SEL. Further, we do not explore deeply or fully the SEL experience for young people by race and ethnicity, primary language, gender identity, or ability. In fact, current SEL frameworks and associated practices are inadequate in addressing SEL for all youth across all settings, and so this is where the movement needs to focus (Berg et al., 2017). Secondly, we know that SEL happens in the context of families, schools, and communities where youth are living, learning, and playing. This volume focuses on SEL practice in OST programs and systems, but we acknowledge that the primary actors in a young person's SEL are their family members, peers, and other adults in their lives and are a reflection of where they live. Finally, as Blyth points out in the following chapter, SEL is criticized as having a dominant culture lens on youth experiences and development. We assert that many of the chapter authors in this volume explore and implement SEL in a participatory way with youth, families, schools, and communities but acknowledge that the field as a whole should continue to push a social justice lens on how we describe and implement practices that build all people's positive development, across settings, and with youth as the drivers and agents of their own trajectory.

CONCLUSION

It has been our privilege to work with the authors in this volume, to gather their stories and hear about the work they are doing to intentionally build SEL into their programs, systems, policies, and research. We think they collectively tell an important story about how SEL has evolved in the OST field, and where it is going. We come away from reading these chapters energized by the work, and with a clear understanding that our next big step as a field is to focus on the adults—to dive deep on what SEL practice looks like in OST programs, and to prepare staff through a concerted professional development effort to implement them. Happy reading!

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