Integrating Social, Emotional, and Academic Development

In the brain, social, emotional, and academic/cognitive functions are all integrated and inter-dependent in learning. Researchers and scientists across education, neuroscience, medicine, psychology, and economics concur: students' sense of social belonging and emotional safety profoundly influence their ability to learn and achieve academically.[1] Treating these issues discretely or sequentially simply won't work—schools and classrooms need an integrated approach to students' social, emotional, and academic development (SEAD).[2] In addition to improving academic outcomes, attending to social and emotional dimensions of student development is essential to genuine college and career readiness. Employers are emphatic that "people skills" (e.g., working on teams, communicating with diverse groups) are in demand and college persistence data bears out that students need more than only academic skills to navigate opportunities and challenges beyond school.[3]

ESSA acknowledges the importance of SEAD by requiring states to broaden their focus from core subject areas to a well-rounded education. This shift is reflected throughout the law, including in the expansion of federal accountability systems beyond math and reading proficiency to include indicators of school quality and student success (e.g., chronic absenteeism, culture/climate surveys), pointing toward the importance of learning environments as a focus of school quality and of school improvement activities. Many states have integrated chronic absenteeism, or a similar measure of school climate or student success, into their accountability system.[4] While there are myriad factors of chronic absenteeism, schools and districts can examine the role of school climate and culture in driving of student absence (i.e., is the school a safe and welcoming place?). ESSA funds can be applied to strengthen learning environments and build students' social and emotional competencies.

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[1] Stephanie M. Jones and Jennifer Kahn, *The Evidence Base for How We Learn: Supporting Students' Social, Emotional, and Academic Development*, The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, September 2017, https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2017/09/SEAD-Research-Brief-11.1.17.pdf

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, et al., *Seven Facts on Noncognitive Skills from Education to the Labor Market*, The Hamilton Project, October 2016, http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/files/seven_facts_noncognitive_skills_education_labor_market.pdf

[4] Phyllis W. Jordan and Raegan Miller, Who's In: Chronic Absenteeism under the Every Student Succeeds Act, FutureEd, September 2017, p. 14-17, https://www.future-ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/REPORT_Chronic_Absenteeism_final_v5.pdf

What's the Opportunity?

In an effort to advance equity, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides federal funds to assist states and districts in meeting the needs of traditionally underserved students, including students of color, students from low-income families, English learners, students with disabilities, and students who are homeless or in foster case. In exchange for robust data reporting, increased transparency, and a commitment to improve underperforming schools, ESSA provides states and districts with the financial flexibility to use federal ESSA funds on a wide range of actions.

Traditionally, district leaders have limited federal funds to expenditures that clearly met federal compliance requirements, such as funding additional academic interventions, due to concerns about triggering federal audits or oversight. While the law's requirement to ensure that federal funds supplement, and do not supplant, state and local funds remains, district and school leaders are no longer bound by accounting restrictions that required to them to make cumbersome financial demonstrations.[i] As a result, district and school leaders now possess greater latitude to invest ESSA funds in ways they think are most likely to benefit underserved students, including aligning their use of ESSA funds with the district's existing strategic priorities.

> This guide is intended to help district leaders disrupt the compliance mindset and inertia that have characterized traditional implementation of federal grants and leverage federal funding and programs in service of a more equitable education system.

Overcoming Potential Barriers to Equity

- Expanding the district's definition of college- and career-readiness to include affective dimensions of student success and more holistic measures of academic achievement, such as growth mindset, belonging, and persistence.

- Ensuring that all teachers and leaders understand the science of learning and development which supports treating social, emotional, and academic domains collectively.

- Integrating SEAD into district-wide strategy and removing silos (such as establishing a separate office to oversee social and emotional learning that does not interact with the curriculum and instruction office or fall under the purview of the Chief Academic Officer) that may lead to only using SEAD as a narrow solution to address discipline problems, for example.

- Developing definitions, frameworks, and measures to guide the implementation and continuous improvement of work on SEAD.

- Addressing underlying root causes like trauma, injustice, and unsafe or unwelcoming learning environments.

- Valuing students' culture and lived experiences and treating them as assets rather than deficits.

Example: Using SEAD to Improve English Learners' Academic Outcomes

School climate measures provide valuable insights for school and district leaders to explore factors that affect student achievement—beyond simply using test scores. By effectively incorporating measures of school climate and SEAD into their knowledge base, district leaders can effectively explore the intersection between school climate, student achievement, and district strategy and policies.

In 2016, Summit Public Schools conducted a review of student learning data and identified a stubborn trend: English Learners (ELs), who comprised 12 percent of Summit's student population, consistently struggled to be on track for graduation and college.[5] Summit's analysis of student data showed that EL students entered schools with larger gaps in academic knowledge and skills than other student groups and did not make enough progress during their time at Summit to catch up to their peers to on track for college readiness. Among the student data Summit reviewed, Youth Truth's student surveys of school and classroom culture showed that EL students tended to be just as positive as non-EL students. However, results from another set of student surveys used by Summit, Carnegie's Student Agency Improvement Community Survey, found relatively lower scores for EL students, particularly in the areas of growth mindset and a feeling of academic belonging.[6]

Summit quickly activated a team to address these issues, launching an effort to collect additional data and analyze the effectiveness of various interventions intending to improve EL students' growth mindset and feeling of academic belonging. Summit selected and compensated four teachers to work part-time on this initiative. These four teachers remained full-time employees with regular teaching duties and devoted 25 percent of their time to creating and testing interventions with their students, collecting data, and working with a small team of testers to analyze the data and scale changes that appeared to improve ELs' growth mindset and sense of belonging within and across Summit schools. Additionally, Summit worked to identify teachers with exceptional results for EL students, interviewed those teachers, asked for their materials, and worked with them to build a package of resources available to anyone interested in

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[5] Interview with Adam Carter (Chief Academic Officer, Summit Public Schools), March 30, 2017.

[6] Growth mindset refers to the belief that intelligence can be developed. Academic belonging refers to the belief that one is respected and valued by teachers and peers and fits in culturally in one's environment.

[7] Access Summit's list of instructional resources: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13AJ-vThNWxapy0tGcrbiA J7fpFKq9OuKxPiQZxxzWV0/edit#gid=0

better supporting ELs.[7] Summit's professional development is now aligned to the resources in this package.

In 2016-2017, the first year of implementation for this initiative, Summit saw the achievement gap between EL students and non-EL students shrink by 25%, all of which was due to academic improvement among EL students.

District leaders can use ESSA in a number of ways to implement strategies like those used by Summit to integrate SEAD. They can use student surveys as a tool to gather data for needs assessments, and they can braid Title funds (e.g., Title I, Title II, Title IV) to train teachers and develop and implement evidence-based interventions that address SEAD issues.

What Should I Look for in My State Context?

All states were required to submit state ESSA plans to the US Department of Education (USDOE), so district leaders interested in improving SEAD should familiarize themselves with the relevant aspects of their state plan[8] related to this equity priority. Questions that district leaders can ask about their state plans and of their broader state context include:

- How does my state incorporate measures of school quality and student success into its ESSA accountability system (i.e., what measure(s) did they choose, how much weight do they carry within the overall system)?

- Has my state adopted social and emotional learning frameworks, standards, competencies, or clearly defined terms?

- Does my state have any existing or upcoming teacher training initiatives for SEAD, child development, or human development?

- Does my state require, offer, and/or fund school culture and climate surveys?

- How is my state distributing school improvement grants and Title IV funds? Are they using a competitive grant process, distributing by formula, or taking a hybrid approach?

- Is my state taking the optional Title II set-aside for school leaders? If so, how are they planning to use this funding? Can it be used to train school leaders on integrating SEAD?

- Is my state requiring a specific needs assessment for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement? If so, does it collect data on SEAD metrics?

- Are our instructional materials aligned across social, emotional, and academic domains?

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[7] Access Summit's list of instructional resources: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13AJ-vThNWxapy0tGcrbiA J7fpFKq9OuKxPiQZxxzWV0/edit#gid=0

[8] All state plans submitted to the US Department of Education are available here: https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/ account/stateplan17/statesubmission.html

✅ Turning ESSA's Requirements into Opportunities

This table summarizes ESSA requirements for districts and provides illustrative examples of how district leaders could move beyond meeting ESSA's requirements to using the law to drive their strategic priorities. Each box includes a reference to the related ESSA statutory provision found in the ESSA Provisions section of this brief (see p. 8) so that district leaders are able to validate any actions that they take to integrate SEAD.

	WHAT DOES ESSA REQUIRE DISTRICTS TO DO?	HOW COULD DISTRICT LEADERS BUILD ON ESSA REQUIREMENTS?
REPORTING AND DATA ANALYSIS	ESSA requires states and school districts to produce report cards that include a measure of school quality or student success. Districts must also report on additional measures of school quality, climate, and safety.[ii]	District leaders may choose to analyze and disaggregate additional data to include in report cards that focus on measures related to SEAD (e.g., use of evidence-based social-emotional development strategies, surveys assessing students' sense of belonging and growth mindsets).
SET PRIORITIES AND MAKE DECISIONS	Districts are required to conduct resource reviews for schools that are identified for comprehensive support and improvement and additional targeted support and improvement.[iii]	Resource reviews of comprehensive support and improvement schools should include resources that affect the quality of SEAD in the school, like the number of student support personnel or counselors. District should also consider conducting these resource reviews for targeted support and intervention schools.
	Districts must conduct needs assessments for schools that are identified for comprehensive support and improvement.[iii]	District leaders should include questions on their needs assessments that focus on factors related to SEAD. For example, what are results from student and teacher climate surveys? How are these results related to student academic achievement? What existing SEAD practices might explain these results? District leaders should also consider conducting these needs assessments in schools identified for targeted support and improvement.

WHAT DOES ESSA REQUIRE DISTRICTS TO DO?	HOW COULD DISTRICT LEADERS BUILD ON ESSA REQUIREMENTS?
Districts must use evidence-based interventions to improve student outcomes in schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement and targeted support and improvement.[iii,iv]	District leaders can choose evidence-based interventions that focus on SEAD outcomes. [9]

$ Using Flexible Funding

This table provides illustrative examples of the ways that district leaders can use ESSA funding to move toward integrating SEAD. The examples below are meant to elicit creative thinking about braiding funds to accomplish this equity initiative; they are not exhaustive.

OPPORTUNITY

Develop non-academic skills	**TITLE I** Improve students' non-academic skills in schoolwide and targeted assistance programs[v] **TITLE II** Train teachers on non-academic student supports[vi] **TITLE III** Improve family supports for English Learners and recent immigrants[vii] **TITLE IV** Use 21st Century Community Learning Centers to build SEAD competencies[viii]
Support evidence-based SEAD interventions.	**TITLE I** Use school improvement funds to implement evidence-based interventions[iii,iv] **TITLE II** Fund school-based professional development on culturally-responsive teaching[ix]
	Continued on next page

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[9] Sean Grant et al., *Social and Emotional Learning Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review*, RAND Corporation, 2017, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2133.html.

Develop SEAD competencies through instructional materials and aligned PD	**TITLE I** Purchase instructional materials that explicitly address SEAD dimensions of learning[v] **TITLE II** Fund school-based PD on how to integrate SEAD or how to identify instructional materials to deliberately develop SEAD competencies[ix] **TITLE IV** Fund school-based professional development on mental health interventions and other school-based supports for students[x] **TITLE IV** Use 21st Century Community Learning Centers to build SEAD competencies[viii]
Focus on supporting the whole child through a SEAD lens	**TITLE IV** Identify how funding streams will be braided to strengthen a focus on SEAD across different subparts of Title IV (i.e., well-rounded education, safe and healthy students, and technology)[xi]

*Title II and Title IV funding can be moved into any other Titles, expanding the pots of money that can be spent on actions eligible for Title I and III funds. Titles I and III cannot be moved.

Resources

- RAND Corporation, Social and Emotional Learning Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act
  https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2133.html

- Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development
  https://www.aspeninstitute.org/programs/national-commission-on-social-emotional-and-academic-development/

- Education First, Social and Emotional Learning: Why Students Need It, What Districts are Doing About It
  https://education-first.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Education-First_Social-and-Emotional-Learning_-October-2016.pdf

- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
  https://casel.org

- Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, RULER Framework
  http://ei.yale.edu/ruler/

- Turnaround for Children, Building Blocks for Learning
  https://www.turnaroundusa.org/what-we-do/tools/building-blocks/
- School Climate Surveys
    - University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, 5Essentials
      https://cps.5-essentials.org/2017/
    - Tripod Surveys
      http://tripoded.com
    - Youth Truth Student Survey
      http://www.youthtruthsurvey.org

ESSA Provisions

This table provides statutory references for district leaders so that they can draw upon ESSA to validate district changes that promote integrating SEAD in service of equity.

	ESSA STATUTORY LANGUAGE
i	A special rule within ESSA's supplement, not supplant provision changes the financial accounting methodology as follows: '(1) In general.—A State educational agency or local educational agency shall use Federal funds received under this part only to supplement the funds that would, in the absence of such Federal funds, be made available from State and local sources for the education of students participating in programs assisted under this part, and not to supplant such funds. (2) Compliance.—To demonstrate compliance with paragraph (1), a local educational agency shall demonstrate that the methodology used to allocate State and local funds to each school receiving assistance under this part ensures that such school receives all of the State and local funds it would otherwise receive if it were not receiving assistance under this part. (3) Special rule.—No local educational agency shall be required to— (A) identify that an individual cost or service supported under this part is supplemental; or (B) provide services under this part through a particular instructional method or in a particular instructional setting in order to demonstrate such agency's compliance with paragraph (1)." [Sec. 1118(b)(1)-(3)].

ii	The state report card requirements outlined in Sec. 1111(h)(1)(C) also apply to districts, which must report on "not less than one indicator of school quality or student success" as identified in the state's accountability system [Sec. 1111(c)(4)(B)(v)(I)]
	District report cards must include Office of Civil Rights reporting on: "measures of school quality, climate, and safety, including rates of in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, school-related arrests, referrals to law enforcement, chronic absenteeism (including both excused and unexcused absences), incidences of violence, including bullying and harassment" [Sec. 1111(h)(1)(C)(viii).
iii	For all schools that the state identifies as needing comprehensive support and intervention (CSI) in a district, the district must work with "stakeholders (including principals and other school leaders, teachers, and parents)" to develop a plan that:

"(ii) includes evidence-based interventions;

(iii) is based on a school-level needs assessment;

(iv) identifies resource inequities, which may include a review of local educational agency and school-level budgeting, to be addressed through implementation of such comprehensive support and improvement plan;

(v) is approved by the school, local educational agency, and State educational agency; and

(vi) upon approval and implementation, is monitored and periodically reviewed by the State educational agency." [Sec. 1111(d)(1)(B)(ii)-(vi)]

For schools identified for additional targeted support and improvement (ATSI), school districts must also "identify resource inequities (which may include a review of local education agency and school level budgeting)" [Sec. 1111(d)(2)(C)].

Targeted support and improvement (TSI) schools where the performance of any subgroup of students on their own would lead the state to identify the school for CSI must also conduct a resource review [Sec. 1111(d)(C)]. If these TSI schools are Title I schools, they can become CSI schools if they do not exit TSI status (exit status for TSI schools is determined by the local educational agency). And in the first year of identification (2017-2018), states "shall notify local educational agencies of any schools served by the local educational agency in which any subgroup of students, on its own, would lead to identification under [the lowest-performing 5 percent of all Title I schools] even without having those schools be identified as TSI schools first [Sec. 1111(d)(2)(D)].

iv	For all schools that the state identifies as needing targeted support and intervention (TSI), the school must develop a plan that:

"(ii) includes evidence-based interventions;

(iii) is approved by the local educational agency prior to implementation of such a plan;

(iv) is monitored, upon submission and implementation, by the local educational agency; and

(v) results in additional action following unsuccessful implementation of such plan after a number of years determined by the local educational agency." [Sec. 1111(d)(2)(ii)-(v)]

TSI schools where any subgroup of students on its own would lead to identification by the state as a CSI school must also conduct a resource review [Sec. 1111(d)(C)].

v	Schools implementing schoolwide and targeted assistance programs may use Title I funds to implement counseling, school-based mental health programs, specialized instructional support, mentoring, other strategies to improve students' non-academic skills [Sec. 1114(b)(7)(A)(ii)]. Title I targeted assistance schools may also use Title I-A funds to provide Title I students with a variety of interventions that can include addressing aspects of social, emotional, and academic development [Sec. 1115(b)(2)].
vi	Title II-A local funds may be used for in-service training for school personnel in the techniques and supports needed to help educators understand when and how to refer students affected by trauma, or students with or at risk of mental illness, the use of referral mechanisms that effectively link such children to treatment and intervention services, forming partnerships between school-based mental health programs and public or private mental health organizations, and addressing issues related to school conditions for student learning, such as safety, peer interaction, drug and alcohol abuse, and chronic absenteeism [Sec. 2103(b)(3)(I)].
vii	Districts can use Title III funds to support English Learners in a variety of areas, including "to assist parents and families in helping their children to improve their academic achievement and becoming active participants in the education of their children" [Sec. 3115(d)(6)(B)], which could include a focus on SEAD. For districts experiencing substantial increases in immigrant children and youth, funds are available that can be used for "the provision of tutorials, mentoring, and academic

	or career counseling for immigrant children and youth" [Sec. 3115(e)(1)(C)] and for the parent and family support services described above [Sec. 3115(E)(1)(A)].
viii	Under Title IV-B, states competitively award grants to school districts, community organizations, non-profits, and other eligible entities to establish 21st Century Community Learning Centers. Funds can be used to establish or expand centers offering academic and supplemental services to students, family members, and community members [Sec. 4204(a)(1)-(2)]. Recipients of funds may use them for a variety of purposes, including but not limited to "drug and violence prevention programs and counseling programs" [Sec. 4205(a)(12)].
ix	Districts can use Title II-A funds for "carrying out other activities that are evidence-based, to the extent the State (in consultation with local educational agencies in the State) determines that such evidence is reasonably available, and identified by the local educational agency that meet the purpose of this title" [Sec. 2103(b)(3)(P)].
x	Districts must use a portion of their Title IV-A funding for activities to support safe and healthy students, which may include school-based mental health services, [Sec. 4108(5)(B)(ii)], programs that provide mentoring and school counseling, [Sec. 4108(5)(C)(v)], high-quality training for school personnel, including on effective and trauma-informed practices in classroom management, and crisis management and conflict resolution techniques [Sec. 4108(5)(D)].
xi	In their Title IV-A applications for local funds, district leaders must describe "the program objectives and intended outcomes for activities under this subpart, and how the local educational agency, or consortium of such agencies, will periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the activities carried out under this section based on such objectives and outcomes" [Sec. 4106(e)(1)(E)].