

# LEARNING ECOSYSTEM TOOLKIT

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with The Learning Future

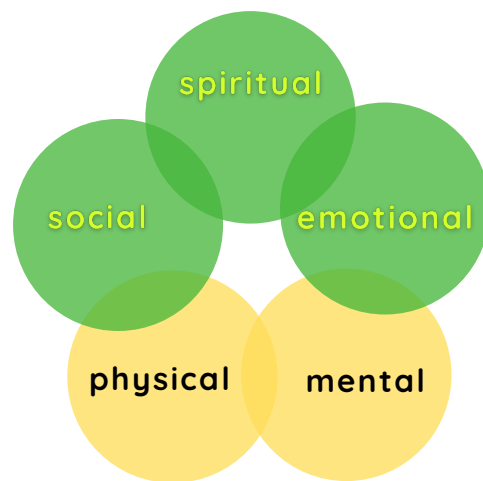


# Welcome!

Hello and welcome to our toolkit for equipping our communities with skills that we, at The Learning Future, believe can make the most of the challenges and possibilities of today and tomorrow.

Whilst the Learning Ecosystem encompasses 5 different aspects of learning and wellbeing, this resource in particular focuses on elevating the **social and emotional** dimensions of the Learning Ecosystem. Research shows that by elevating the social and emotional dimensions of learning, we're able to improve our mental and physical health, academic and employment success, as well as family, community and work relationships (1,2). Consequently, the social and emotional dimensions of learning play an important part in our wellbeing, our ability to be lifelong learners and succeed in different aspects of life ([see our video about SEL](#)).

The elevated Social & Emotional aspects of the Wheel of Wellbeing & the Multi-Dimensional Model of Learning:



This resource will cover **3 key elements** needed to enhance the social and emotional dimensions of the Learning Ecosystem. These 3 key elements have been derived from a synthesis of research and information from a variety of sources. These include:

- **Encouraging Environment** (*climate*)
- **Fitting Framework** (*nutrients*)
- **Achievable Actions & Activities** (*organisms*)

Although the majority of the research used in this resource focuses on how educators can elevate the social and emotional (SE) dimensions of learning and wellbeing in learning environments, we hope to provide parents and carers with some additional support, so that together we can enhance SE dimensions at a wider scale.

We hope that this resource supports you, informs and contributes to how you may approach your own learning, as well as the learning of others, in order for us to continue fertilising and creating a thriving Learning Ecosystem.

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# Encouraging Environment

An Encouraging and supportive Environment acts as the foundation for a learning environment; the water, temperature and light that dictates how an ecosystem will function and flourish. More specifically, the Environment (climate) controls what Achievable Actions and Activities (organisms) and learning processes the Learning Ecosystem is able to host and, consequently, what learners the Learning Ecosystem is able to benefit.

In particular, the creation of supportive environments with a focus on student needs, mental health and wellbeing can shift educational values from productivity to people. By making learners feel that their needs and who they are as individuals are valued, learners arguably feel empowered and confident to take charge of their own holistic learning (3,4).

Furthermore, this approach to creating an Encouraging Environment helps to build positive relationships between educators, parents, carers and learners (2). Strengthening such relationships evokes a sense of belonging for learners, allowing them to feel psychologically safe to self-direct their learning (2,5): improving participation, risk-taking within and contributions to the learning environment. Additionally, this sense of belonging enhanced by an Encouraging Environment allows learners to heal from the negative feelings and impacts of significant global and local impacts, to allow them to continue to grow and flourish (5).

The following page highlights just some of the resources we have found that provide examples of how Encouraging Environments can be created to work towards elevating the social and emotional dimensions of the Learning Ecosystem:





## Resource:

### Edutopia- Fall-Hamilton Elementary (Nashville, TN) (6)



### Amal Alliance's Colors of Kindness program (Bangladesh) (1)



(7)

## Contents:

- Fall-Hamilton Elementary has developed a trauma-informed environment to respond to learners' individual needs by:
  - Educators mentoring individual students in difficult situations via daily check-ins & check-outs.
  - Ambient lighting & diffusers used in classrooms to create a welcoming & comforting physical environment.
  - Designing 'peace' corners in classrooms where learners can rest, reflect and recover when they need a break from negative or overwhelming feelings, as well as to regain focus.
- A Social & Emotional Learning (SEL) Framework with a heavy focus on mental health, wellbeing & mindfulness via different activities, including:
  - Yoga & other physical activities
  - Breathing exercises
  - Check-ins (using an 'emotion thermometer' (8))
  - Gratitude practices
  - Others.
- Hybrid learning including podcasts & other digital resources (alongside in-person learning) ensure learners' wellbeing remains prioritised both inside & outside of educational spaces.

## Resource:

### CASEL Recommendations (9)



Guide to  
Schoolwide SEL

### Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD) Social & Emotional Survey Report (& Recommendations) (2)



OECD

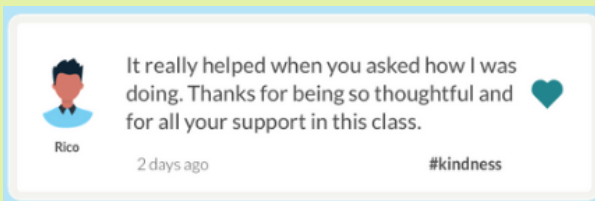
BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

## Contents:

- CASEL = SEL framework that suggests educators can create a sense of belonging & psychological safety (where learners feel valued) via:
    - Educators (parents & carers) being receptive to learner feedback, ideas, questions & needs;
    - Invite learners to participate in surveys that provide feedback of educators, activities & the learning environment (conveying to learners that their opinions and needs are valued).
    - Invite learners to share their backgrounds & experiences:
      - E.g. 'Learner biographies' activity- where learners can explore their needs as learners and the factors/ experiences in their life that contribute to who they are now.
  - Appreciate the diversity of learners by using materials catered to cultural & learning diversity.
  - Individual educator/parent/carer-learner check-ins.
- 
- The OECD reports globally, on average, 15 years olds experience lower life satisfaction, psychological wellbeing & higher test anxiety than 10 year olds.
  - The OECD suggests this can be counteracted by:
    - Training educators, parents & carers how to detect early changes in behaviour, psychological distress, also how to respond to this & encourage learner wellbeing.
    - Educators, parents & carers balancing expectations of learners with support for their learners.
    - Educators building positive relationships with students through:
      - Adapting class content to suit learners' needs
      - Encouraging creativity amongst learners
      - Individual support for struggling learners.
    - Reducing bullying.

## Resource:

### GiveThx program (United States) (1)



(10)

Hey Parents  
& Carers!  
This one's  
for you!  
:)

### National Health Service's (NHS) 5 key (evidence- based) steps to Mental Wellbeing (11)



(12)

## Contents:

- Digital thank you notes & constructive feedback exchanged between educators & learners.
    - In Finland: classes start with positive feedback (this motivates students & builds their sense of belonging).
  - Educators trained how to facilitate activities to aid in creating a positive environment, relationships & community.
  - Student-centered curriculum that includes balance (i.e. of SEL & academics) & teaches students how to foster a comfortable & positive environment.
  - Parents & caregivers to be included in this initiative... (= systems-wide change)
  - Free resources and communication available to the public!
- 
- Encourage positive relationships between you & learners, via:
    - Meal times together at home
    - Arranging time with their friends
    - Engaging in conversations about how they're doing
    - Showing gratitude for learner
    - Taking time away from technology to talk, interact or play.
  - Physical activity-
    - Cater this to the needs and abilities of your learner
    - Consistently implement, so it smoothly fits into your daily life.
  - Connect via learning a new skill (that you collectively enjoy) together;
    - This will encourage a positive relationship between you to form
    - Builds learners' confidence & self-esteem.
  - Regularly practicing mindfulness.



# Fitting Framework

A Fitting Framework provides the nutrients that are necessary to fertilise and nourish the growth and ability for organisms (Achievable Actions and Activities) to flourish within an (Learning) ecosystem. There are numerous Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) frameworks out there with different focuses, values and supporting evidence that can shape how the social and emotional skills of different learners evolve. In turn, this contributes to how learners take charge of and contribute to the development of the Learning Ecosystem.

As there are a multitude of different SEL frameworks (and we unfortunately can't quite fit them all in our resource!), we will only be summarising 3 frameworks:

1. **CASEL Framework**
2. **SEE Framework**
3. **SEARCH Framework**

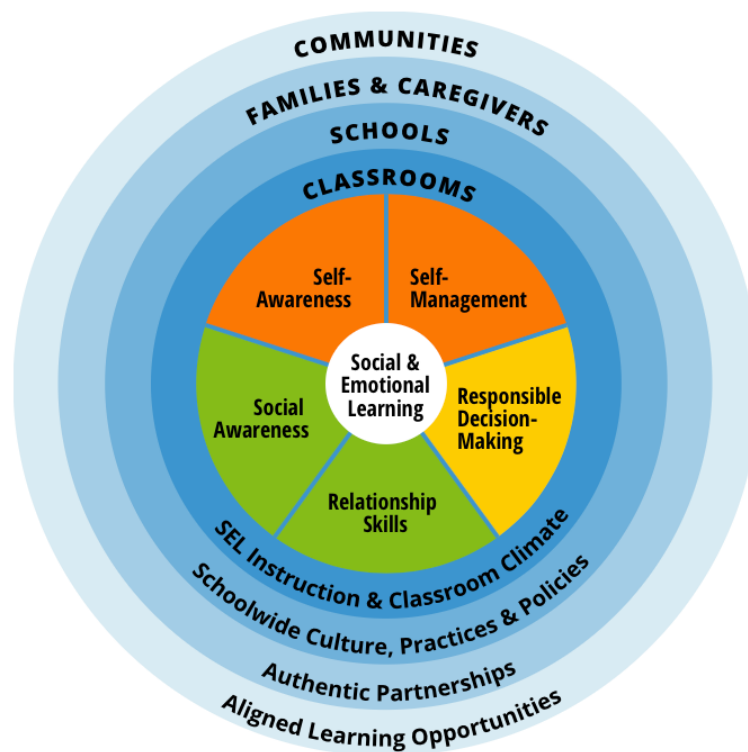
The first 2 frameworks can be applied to a broad range of contexts, whilst the SEARCH Framework provides an example of a localised SEL framework. By the end of this section, you may find that these frameworks aren't quite suited to your learners' social and emotional needs. But that's okay! There are a variety of other SEL frameworks available at Harvard University and EASEL Lab's Explore SEL resource (13), which we encourage you to explore.





# 1. Collaborative for Academic, Social & Emotional Learning (CASEL) Framework:

The CASEL Framework (developed by the CASEL non-profit organisation) is one of the world's first-established SEL frameworks. The CASEL framework aims to partner a variety of stakeholders at a systems-wide level, in order to enhance the development of learners' Social and Emotional (SE) skills across their lifetime (targeting preK-12 education) (14). These SE skills are summarised as 5 core competencies (Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills & Responsible Decision-Making) which CASEL states can collectively reap a multitude of diverse benefits (14,15,16). **CASEL Framework wheel:** (14)



Explore SEL's summary of the CASEL Framework: (13)



DOMAINS

- Cognitive
- Emotion
- Social
- Values
- Perspectives
- Identity

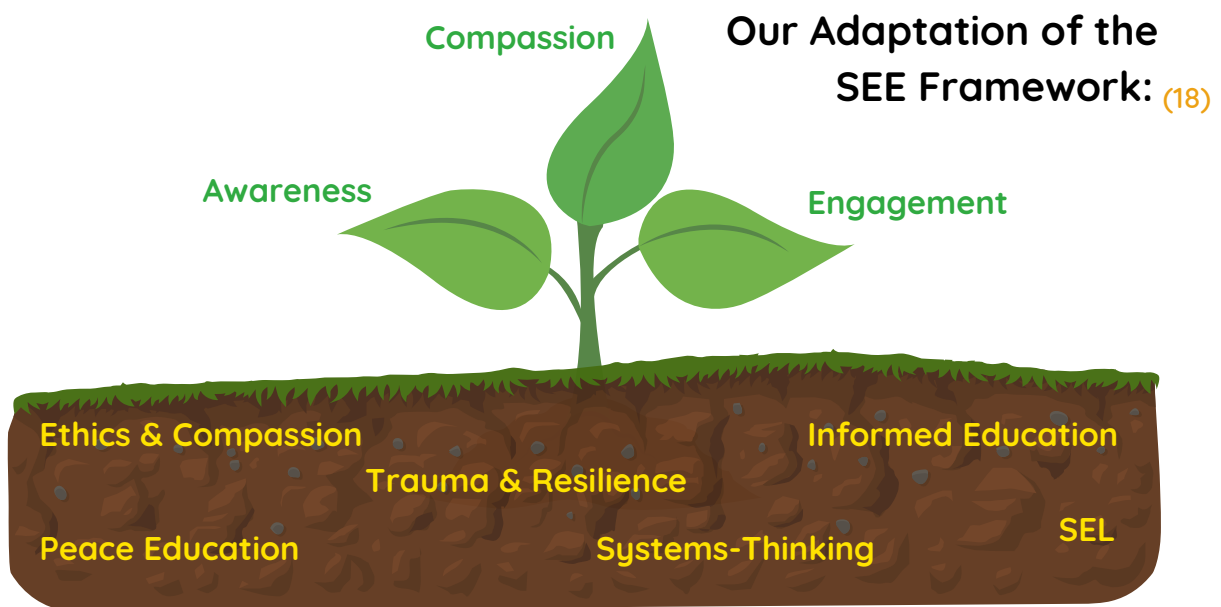


## 2. Social, Emotional and Ethical (SEE) Learning Framework:

Compassion and ethics lie at the heart of the SEE framework (produced by the Center for Contemplative Science and Compassion-Based Ethics (CCSCBE) at Emory University in collaboration with the Dalai Lama), with a focus on developing the heart and mind (17).

Like the CASEL framework, the SEE framework also applies to learners from a variety of diverse backgrounds, abilities and ages (K-12 and higher education levels, in particular), but does so through universal ethics (17). Additionally, the SEE framework encourages educators and guardians to use the framework in a manner that best compliments their values and context (17).

The SEE framework focuses on 3 key dimensions: awareness, compassion and engagement (17). Furthermore, this framework expands on new evidence around the social and emotional dimensions of learning, as well as offers lesson plans and training for educators (18).



### Explore SEL's summary of the SEE Framework: (13)

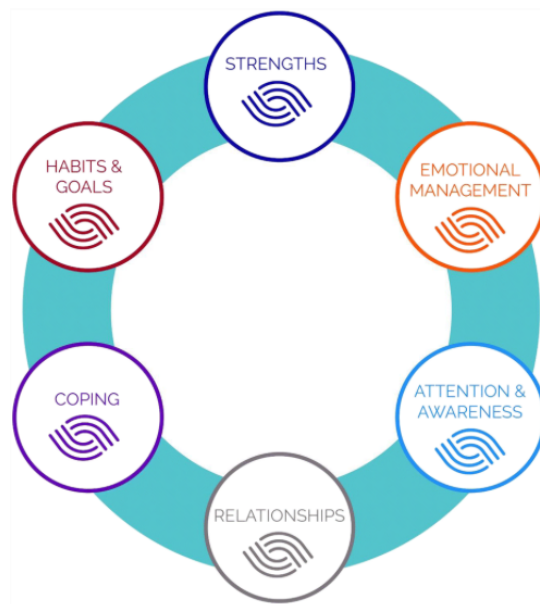


#### DOMAINS



### 3. SEARCH Framework:

The Strengths, Emotional Management, Attention & Awareness, Relationships, Coping, Habits & Goals (SEARCH) Framework is another evidence-based framework, localised to educators in Victorian Government schools. The SEARCH framework stems from Australian psychologist Lea Waters' extensive research synthesis surrounding positive education, psychology and wellbeing (19). The SEARCH Framework targets the school-wide elevation of the social and emotional dimensions of learning, as well as learner and educator wellbeing. This includes by providing resources for remote learning (19). **SEARCH Framework:**(19)



At present information regarding this framework is unavailable at Explore SEL. However, the table below outlines some of the key learnings and elements of this framework (19).

<b>SEARCH Framework emphasises:</b> (19)
● Fostering student self-directed learning and empowerment.
● Providing educators and learners with emotional support, via teaching them management practices and implementing coping mechanisms.
● Building positive relationships, via a heightened focus on communication skills, strengths, gratitude and mindfulness.
● Fostering a school-wide understanding of, appreciation for and effort to enhance wellbeing.

# Achievable Actions & Activities



Achievable Actions and Activities resemble the organisms that are welcomed to contribute to the functioning of a (Learning) Ecosystem by feeding from the right nutrients (Fitting Framework) within comfortable climatic conditions (Encouraging Environment).

Here are just some of the resources we have found that aid in the uptake and implementation of Achievable Actions and Activities. These resources and the examples they include can contribute to elevating the social and emotional dimensions of the Learning Ecosystem for different learners:

## Resource:

### Edutopia- 'The Importance of Play' (20)



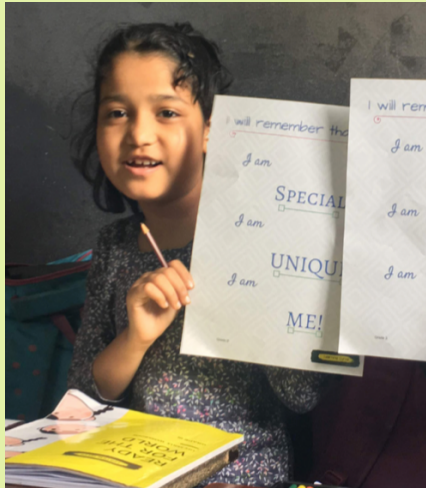
(20)

## Contents:

- Achievable Action & Activity targeting the social & emotional development of pre-schoolers at school and at home using:
  - Incorporating playground games into classroom activities- these encourage SE skills by promoting teamwork, collaboration, patience, resilience & more.
  - Creative mindfulness practices that allow learners to express their feelings (e.g. through music etc.).
  - Can be brought into the classroom every day, including through:
    - Intentional play time at the beginning and/or end of every day.

## Resource:

### HundrED & The Lego Foundation's SEL Recommendations (1)



(1)

### Aulas de Paz - Peace Classrooms, Venezuela (1)



(1)

## Contents:

- Harvard University Professor of Child Development and Education Dr. Stephanie M. Jones & Dr. Emily J. Doolittle- Team Lead for Social Behavioral Research Teaching and Learning Division, National Centre for Econometric Research- suggest effective SEL programs should:
  - Cater curriculums to incorporate explicit SEL education- where SE skills are taught via instruction.
    - E.g. As in acSELeRate program (instruction, age-appropriate SEL curriculums and toolkits)
  - Changing schools rules & expectations (to reduce the focus on academics & emphasise the importance on SE skills)
- Educators and learners use manual designed by Aseinc to implement SEL-
  - Includes different modules with different foci (e.g. conflict resolution, respecting diversity, self/emotional management etc.). The 3 modules:
    - 'I recognise myself'
    - 'I recognise others'
    - 'We live together'
  - At the end of each module = origami folding where students write down key takeaways from the module.
- Transferable learnings to promote positive impacts both inside and outside of schools (i.e. in homes and the wider community).



## Resource:

### In Their Shoes, Spain

(1)



(1)

## Contents:

- Sessions on emotional literacy for whole school communities (students (aged 4-14), teachers & families)
- Uses theatre to display & consequently teach emotions;
  - Promotes team-building & empathy.
  - Students create their own play based on their own coexistence challenges and proposed solutions.
  - Play is performed to students in lower grades to model SE skills.
- Annual course to train teachers as facilitators of this course, who are then able to train others who want to implement the programme.
- SE skills manual available.

## To conclude,

These 3 key conditions- Encouraging Environments, Fitting Frameworks and Achievable Actions and Activities- collectively contribute to the fertilisation of the social and emotional dimensions of the Learning Ecosystem. In turn, these key steps ultimately assist in building stronger, thriving communities for today and tomorrow's world.



# Thank you for engaging with our Learning Ecosystem Toolkit!



We, at The Learning Future, thank you for taking the time to engage with the different ways in which we as a community can elevate the social and emotional dimensions of learning and wellbeing. Despite this being the end of the Learning Ecosystem Toolkit, this is *not quite* the end of our journey towards elevating the social and emotional dimensions of learning and wellbeing. There is a vast array of further unexplored information surrounding the social and emotional dimensions of learning that we invite you to continue learning about alongside us.

**Keen to discover more but not sure  
where to start?  
Here are just a few suggestions!**

**Edutopia** (21)

**Karanga** (22)

**HundrED & The Lego Foundation's SEL  
Innovation Recommendations** (1)



**Thank you once again for your time and engagement.  
We wish you a happy and long life of learning.**

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