

Based on research, theory, and our 25 years of experience, we've compiled this checklist of best practices for implementing Open Circle and social and emotional learning (SEL) in your school or district. Please see page 2 for best practices for Open Circle in the classroom.

Checklist for Schools & Districts

- Seek commitment to SEL as a priority and engage leadership at all levels:**
 - District administration
 - School administration
 - Teachers, counselors, specialists & support staff
- Establish cross-departmental SEL leadership teams at the district- and school-levels:**
 - Annually set and review school-wide SEL goals
 - Plan for sustaining SEL practice over time
- Streamline SEL initiatives:**
 - Include SEL in overall district & school goals
 - Use the most comprehensive SEL program possible
 - Reduce redundant programs to avoid overloading staff and complicating implementation
- Implement SEL with fidelity and thread SEL throughout the school community:**
 - Use teacher-led classroom instruction that is sequenced, active, focused, and explicit
 - Reinforce SEL concepts throughout the day in all subjects and activities
 - Educate parents on SEL skills and concepts to reinforce at home
 - See Open Circle tip sheet “Reinforcing Open Circle School-Wide” for more ideas
- Establish district-wide learning standards for SEL**
- Establish a system for assessing & monitoring implementation, including measurement of:**
 - School climate
 - Student social and emotional skill development
 - Student behavior
- Encourage adults to learn about, reflect on, and practice their own social and emotional skills:**
 - Build relationships among adult community that are respectful, trusting, communicative, and collaborative
 - Model adult social and emotional skills in ways that are visible to students
- Provide ongoing professional development for staff at all levels:**
 - Identify a district-level staff member to coordinate SEL professional development and encourage/monitor implementation at each school
- Acknowledge that SEL implementation takes time because it involves changing behaviors, practices and climate**

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Checklist for Classrooms

- Follow S.A.F.E. standards for curriculum implementation:**
 - Sequenced: Follow the sequence of lessons in the curriculum
 - Active: Regularly incorporate active learning tools (e.g. role-plays, games) and community-building activities
 - Focused: Schedule focused time for SEL — 15-20 minute Open Circle lessons twice a week and daily for the first two week — consistently throughout the school year
 - Explicit: Explicitly teach skills across all domains of social and emotional competency: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships, responsible decision-making

- Connect and adapt SEL to your students needs:**
 - Use developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant instruction and materials
 - Incorporate real, timely issues in your students' lives and provide opportunities for students to contribute to their class, school, and community

- Reinforce carryover outside of focused SEL time:**
 - Display SEL materials (e.g. posters) as references and reminders throughout your classroom
 - Infuse SEL into other curricular areas (e.g. discuss the feelings of a character in a language arts book) and remind students to use SEL skills in emotionally-charged situations (e.g. before tests, unstructured times, transitions)
 - Keep parents informed about SEL instruction at school and how they can leverage and reinforce SEL at home

- Model positive SEL skills in your work with students, colleagues and parents**

What would you add?

Are these lists helpful, useful, easy to understand, and comprehensive? Share your ideas:

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