Early Lessons from Schools and Out-of-School Time Programs

Implementing Social and Emotional Learning

October 26, 2020

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Today's presenters

Gigi Antoni
Director
Learning & Enrichment
The Wallace Foundation

Ann Stone
Senior Research Officer
The Wallace Foundation

Laura Hamilton
Adjunct Behavioral
Scientist, RAND;
General Manager of
Research Centers, ETS

Heather Schwartz
PK-12 Program Director;
Senior Policy Researcher,
RAND Education & Labor

About The Wallace Foundation

- Based in New York City, The Wallace Foundation is an independent national philanthropy that seeks to improve learning and enrichment for children and foster the vitality of the arts for everyone.

- We work with grantee partners to develop – then broadly share – evidence-based, practical insights in our focus areas.

- Current areas of interest include:
  - school leadership
  - expanding and diversifying audiences for the arts
  - social and emotional learning
  - summer learning
  - arts education
  - afterschool

What is social and emotional learning (SEL)?

…the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

"Children learn best when we treat them as human beings, with social and emotional as well as academic needs." – National Commission on Social, Emotional & Academic Development
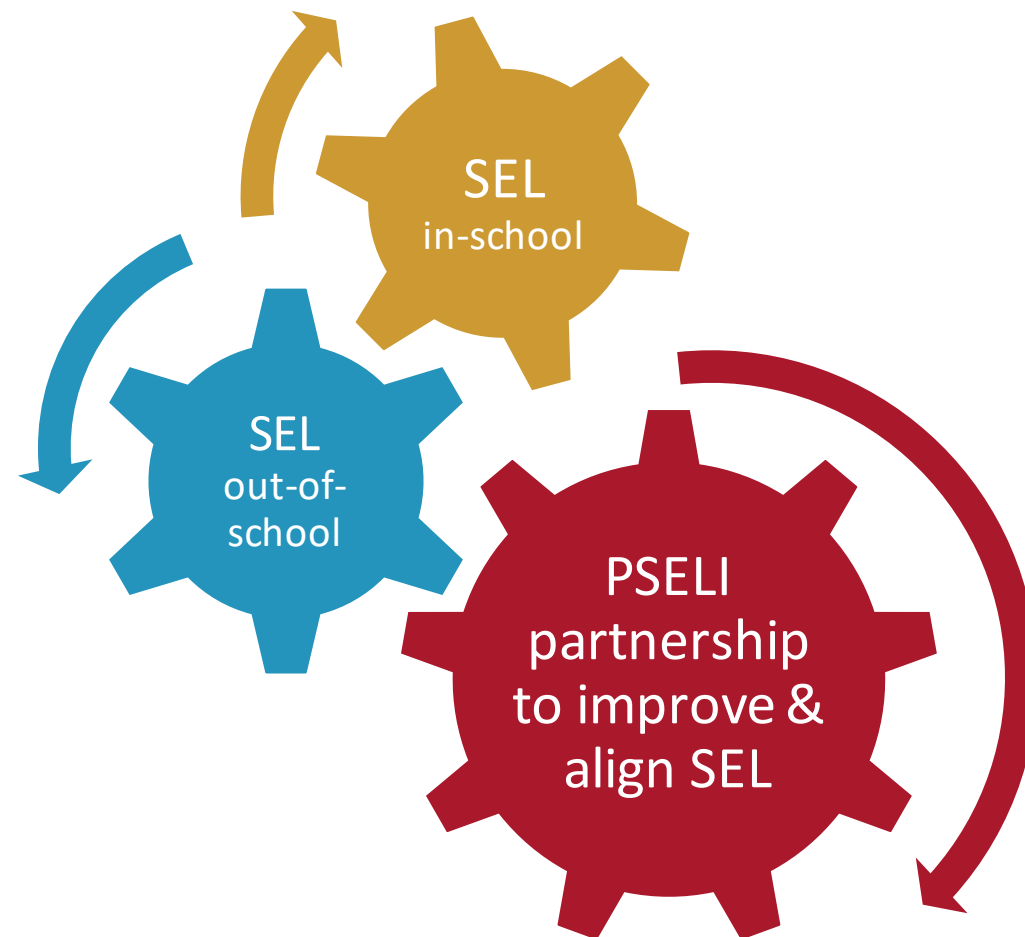
Source: CASEL

How PSELI started: what we knew from the research…

- Children need to develop a range of academic, social, and emotional competencies to succeed in careers, college, and civic life

- Research has demonstrated that several SEL programs and strategies can promote these competencies

- Students develop these competencies over time and in multiple settings including schools and OST programs
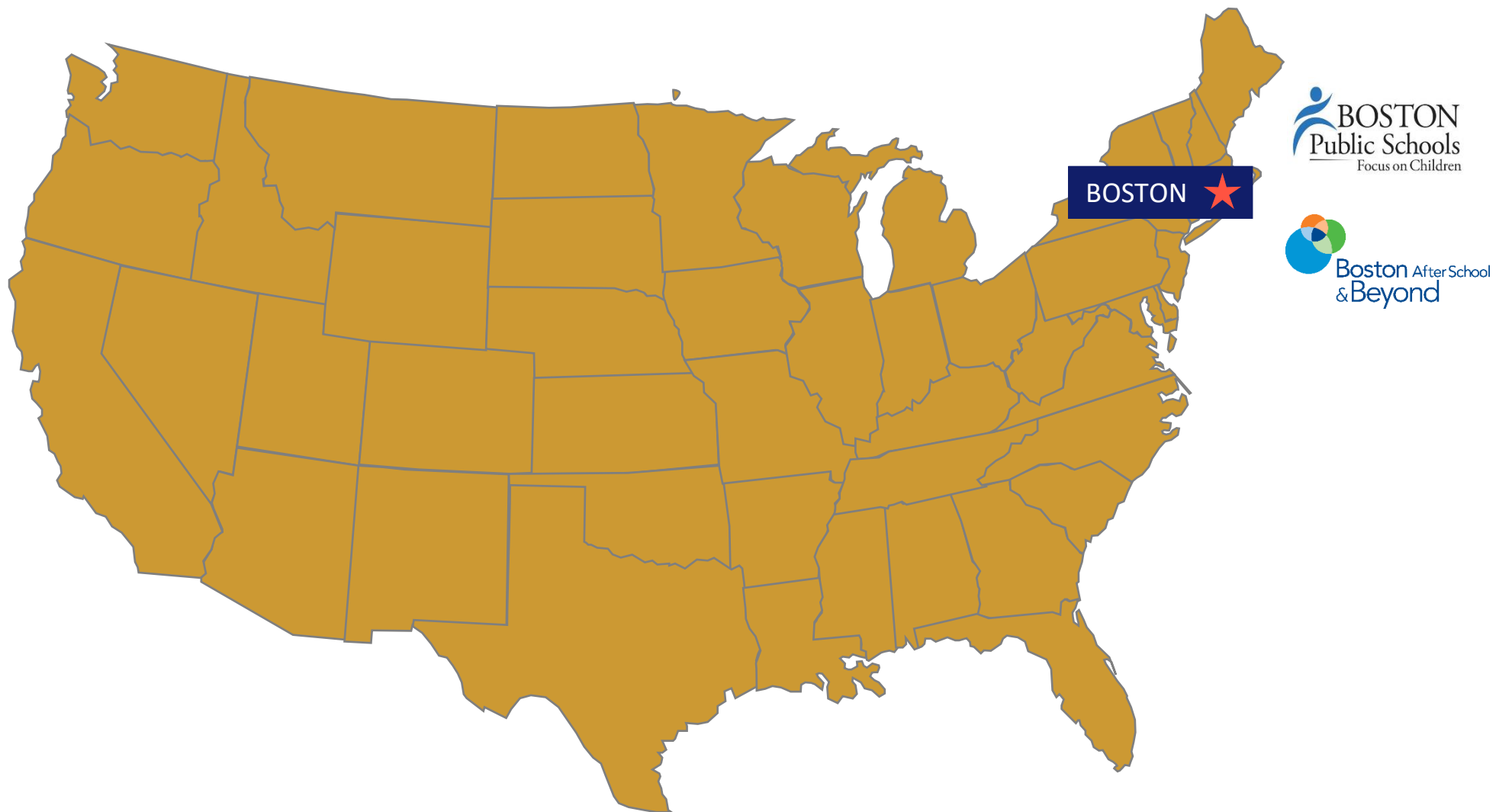
...and what we are seeking to learn

"If urban schools and their afterschool partners work together to improve and align experiences and climate to foster children's social emotional learning, will students benefit — and what does it take to do this work?"

SEL
in-school

SEL
out-of-school

PSELI
partnership
to improve &
align SEL

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The PSELI cohort: 38 sites across 6 communities

BOSTON

BOSTON Public Schools
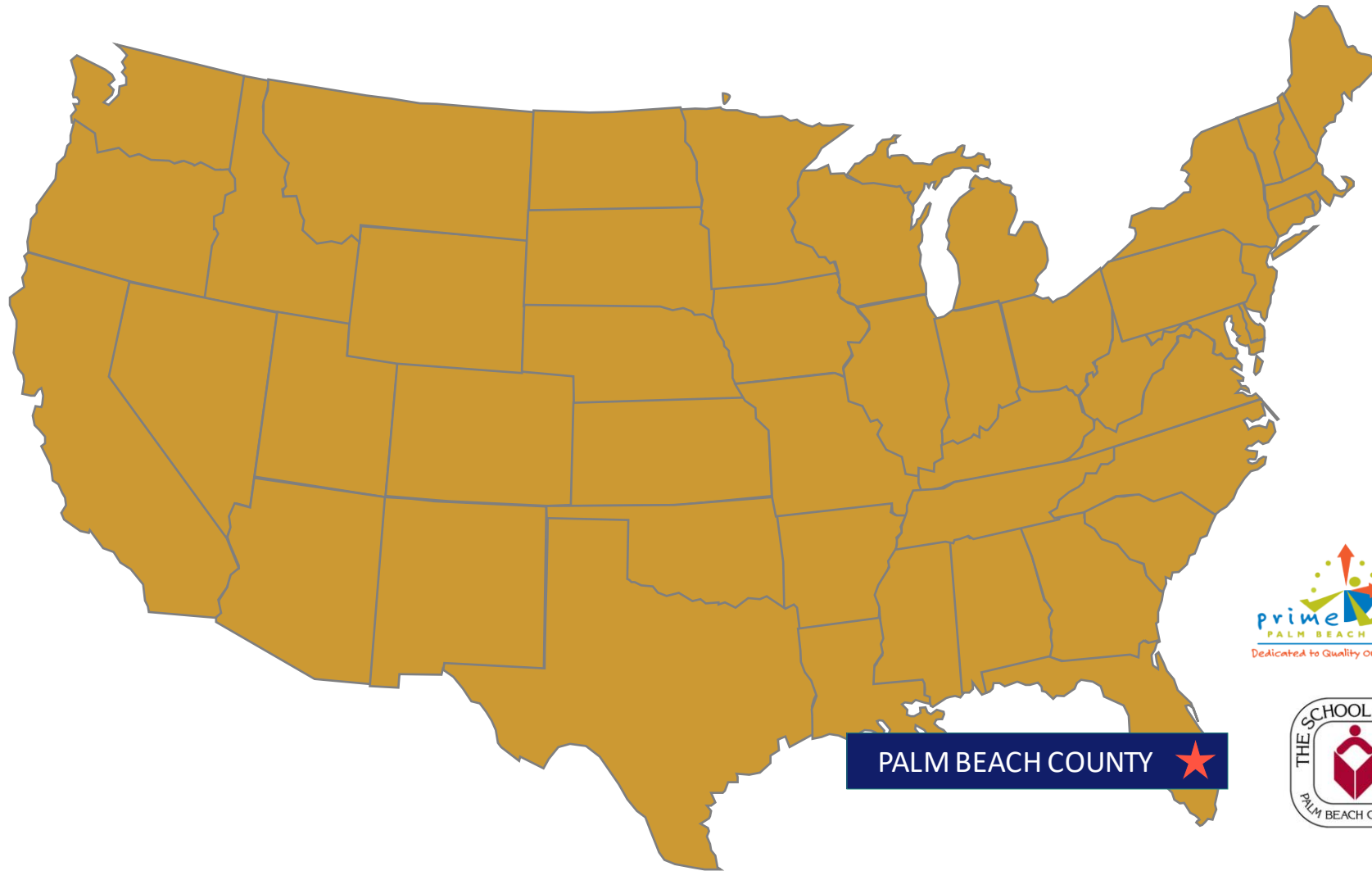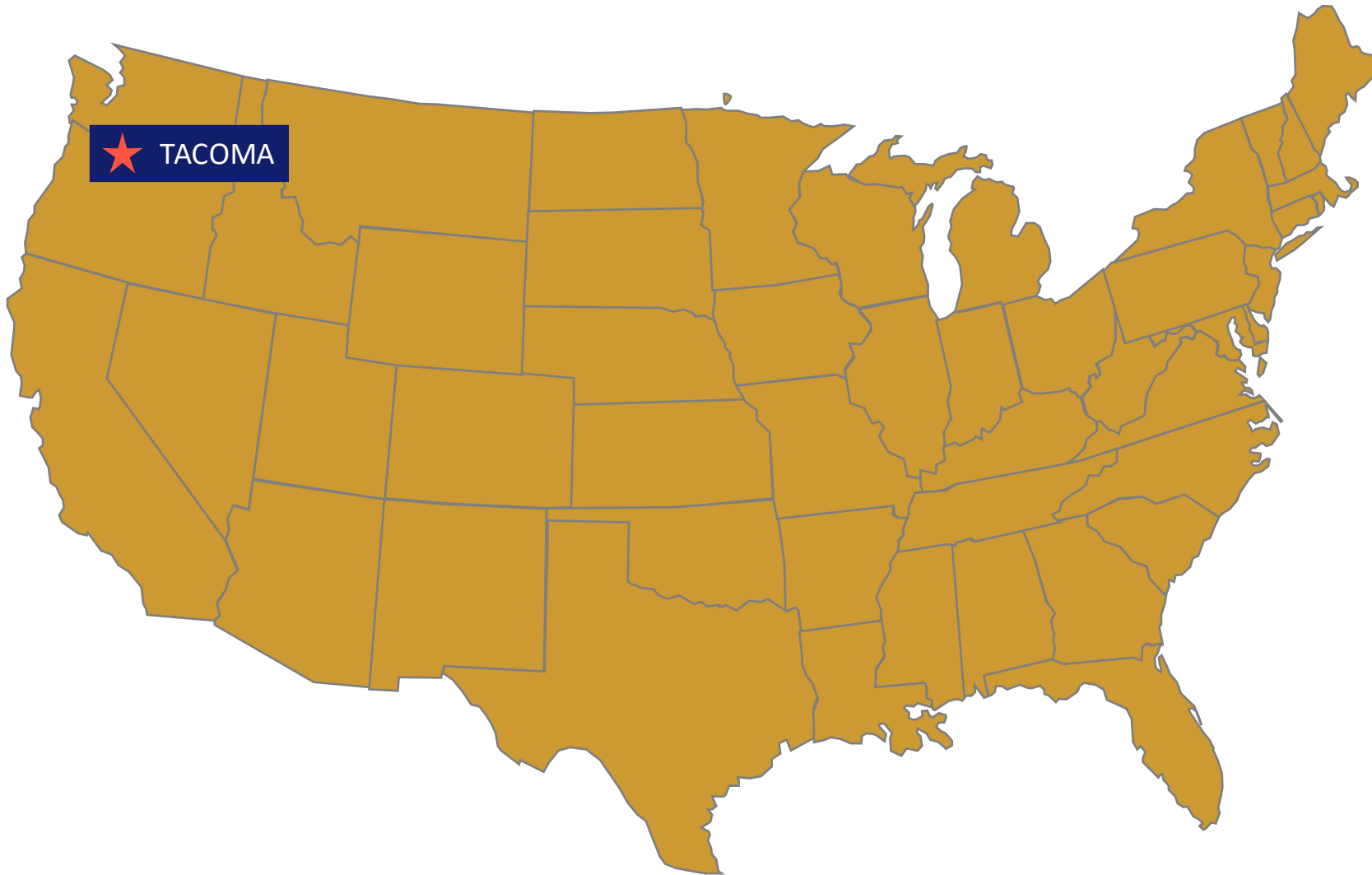Focus on Children

Boston After School
&Beyond

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The PSELI cohort: 38 sites across 6 communities

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PALM BEACH COUNTY ★

The PSELI cohort: 38 sites across 6 communities

TACOMA
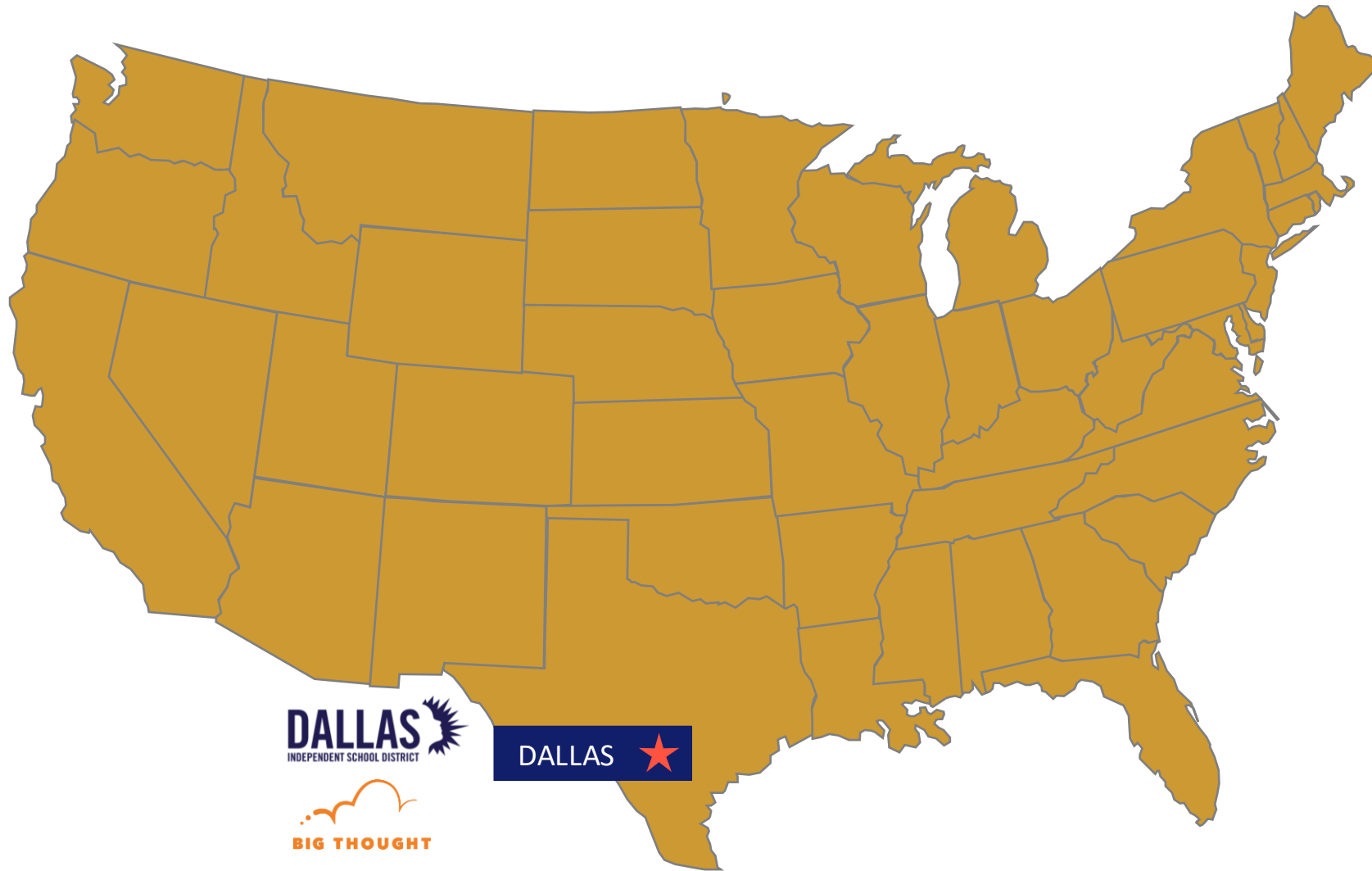
The PSELI cohort: 38 sites across 6 communities

What the communities were asked to do

1. Develop partnerships at the system level (school districts and out-of-school time intermediaries) and site level (school sites and OST programs)

2. Develop a positive culture and climate

3. Offer explicit SEL instruction

4. Integrate SEL into academic instruction and OST activities

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PSELI thought partners

The impact of COVID-19

This report examines implementation during the first two years of PSELI

The focus of this report

	Planning year	Phase 1				Phase 2	
Year of the initiative	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6

2016   2017   2018   2019   2020   2021   2022   2023

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We gathered extensive data from systems and sites

Type of data	Where or from whom collected	Fall 2017	Spring 2018	Spring 2019	Total over first 2 years
Staff surveys	Phase 1 school and OST staff	1,378	1,728	1,938	**5,044**
Interviews	System-level staff	37	47	109	**193**
	Phase 1 school or OST staff	107	146	405	**658**
Observations	Instructional activity (in school or OST)	303	523	854	**1,680**
	Non-instructional activity (e.g., lunch, snack, recess)	58	656	938	**1,652**

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RAND will publish several public reports about PSELI; this is the first one

	Implementation	Outcomes	Application
2020	Early implementation lessons		
2021			
2022	Six case studies		
	Integrated report on implementation and outcomes		
2023			"How to" guide
2024		Additional report, topic TBD	
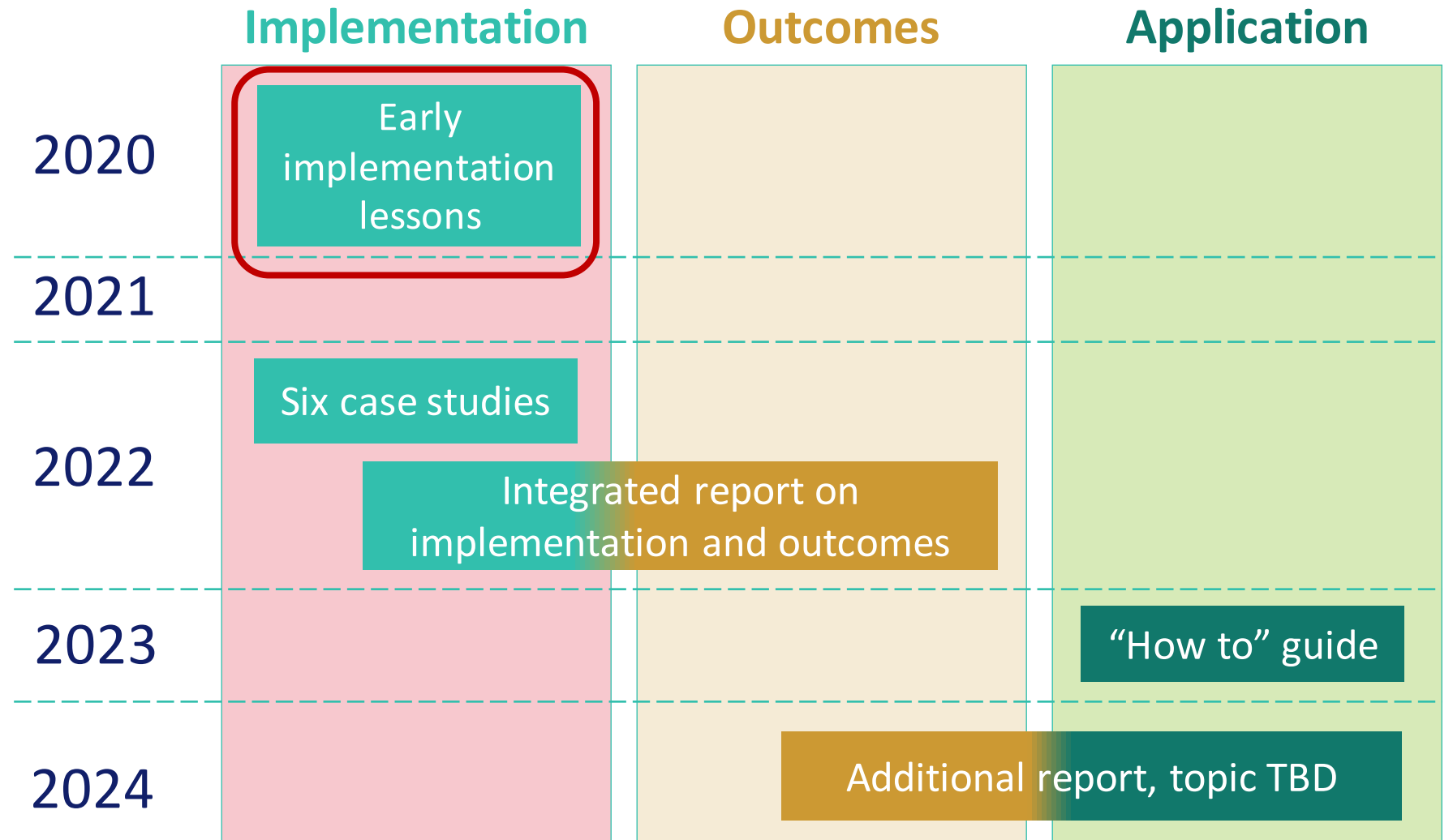
Report covers both *findings* from the 6 communities – and *early lessons*

1. Executing system-level activities to launch and coordinate SEL work across multiple sites

2. Developing district-OSTI and school-OST partnerships

3. Developing adults' capacity to promote SEL

4. Improving climate and delivering SEL instruction to students

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TOPIC #1

System-Level Activities to Launch and Coordinate SEL Work Across Sites

A clearer vision for SEL, paired with desired "look-fors," could have supported a stronger launch.

Clear system-to-site communication required dedicated staff time.

Example: The value of a short overview of expectations

Systemic Approach to Comprehensive Social and Emotional Learning
Guided by the *Core 4 Principles of Social and Emotional Learning*, successful implementation of comprehensive SEL includes four key areas of support, or "legs of the stool".

SEL DALLAS
Social and Emotional Learning

PRINCIPLES CORE 4 OF SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Relationships
RELATIONSHIPS are the key to success. Caring, supportive and respectful relationships are essential.

Environment
ENVIRONMENT enhances the learning experience. Innovative learning experiences in welcoming, safe and supportive environments facilitate collaboration, inclusivity and learning.

Resilience
RESILIENCE empowers you to meet your goals. Learning is a personal journey that involves reflection, perseverance and on-going improvement.

Engagement
ENGAGEMENT drives your learning experience. A culture of empowerment, voice and critical thinking encourages everyone to learn with and from each other.

Climate & Culture
What: Welcoming, safe and supportive environments to foster learning and personal growth

Why: A positive school climate and culture sets the tone for youth and adults and are the foundation for modeling and practicing SEL

How: Examples include adults modeling and practicing SEL skills, referring to adults and students by their name, etc.

Explicit Skills Instruction
What: Teaching the five SEL competencies (Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making) through a selected curricular program

Why: Explicit naming, teaching and supporting SEL skills help students develop SEL skill acquisition

How: Utilize the Sanford Harmony curriculum to lead 45-minutes per week of explicit SEL instruction

Integration
What: Infuse the teaching of SEL skills and competencies with established content delivery, utilizing SEL standards

Why: Provides context and reinforcement of lessons taught during explicit instruction; brings relevance to skill acquisition

How: Examples include a writing prompt that asks students to explore the values of friendship, or writing/acting out a skit that explores bullying and understanding differences in people

Signature Practices
What: The norms and routines that reinforce the acquisition of the five SEL competencies, and are used in classrooms, staff meetings, and common spaces such as cafeterias and hallways

Why: Provides constructive opportunities for adults and students to practice their explicit SEL skills

How: There are three categories of Signature Practices:
1) Welcoming Activity (ex. Icebreakers, morning meeting)
2) Engaging Practices (ex. Brain Breaks, Mindfulness, Opportunities for Student Collaboration)
3) Optimistic Closing (ex. Something I Learned / Wonder)

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Churn and unanticipated external events have been the norm, not the exception, requiring the communities to adapt PSELI work to make it more resilient.

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Selected early lessons for other districts and OST providers to consider

- Identify targeted SEL skills up front

- Develop a common language for SEL

- Focus the early work on a small number of priorities

- Engage an SEL manager

- Develop onboarding materials

TOPIC #2

Developing District-OSTI and School-OST Partnerships

Examples of how sites started to create school-OST staff communication

- ✓ SEL committee with OST & school representation
- ✓ Full time OST manager
- ✓ Part time OST manager
- ✓ Full-time OST SEL specialist
- ✓ SEL champion
- ✓ OST staff hired to work during school day
- ✓ School staff hired to lead OST activities

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Staff turnover posed serious challenges for district-OSTI and school-OST partnerships.

There was a perceived and actual power differential between schools and OST programs.

SEL rituals were a good starting point for OST and school staff to create continuity, which was deepened by use of consistent SEL curricula.

Example: SEL rituals in action

Selected early lessons for other districts and OST providers to consider

- Cultivate school/OST relationships through explicit guidance and tools

- Develop crossover roles

- Document and formalize SEL processes and routines

- Acknowledge unique contributions of school and OST staff and recognize power differential

- Use SEL rituals to promote continuity of practice

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TOPIC #3

Developing Adults' Capacity to Promote SEL

PSELI communities viewed adult SEL skills as a foundation for building student SEL skills.

Example: "Bringing Yourself to Work"

Although support for SEL was high among school and OST staff, they also expressed concerns.

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SEL coaches have served a critical function in helping schools and OST programs deliver SEL instruction.

Example: Boston coaching

Selected early lessons for other districts and OST providers to consider

- Improve climate for both children and adults

- Provide concrete strategies in PD to differentiate SEL instruction

- Develop a PD strategy that accommodates staff turnover

- Share written expectations regarding coaching with both coaches and site-level staff

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TOPIC #4

Improving Climate and Delivering SEL Instruction to Students

Time for stand-alone SEL lessons was often cut short.

Most of the schools adapted the SEL curriculum used.

SEL content sequences for OST programs were in an early stage of development.

Example: SEL activities for OST

CALMING DOWN

Taking deep breaths or 'belly breathing' is a quick and simple way to calm ourselves down. We also call this mindfulness. When you have a strong feeling try focusing your attention on your breathing. Take a breath that makes your tummy move out when you breathe in, and in when you breathe out. Be mindful of how it feels in your body as your breathe comes in and out. Breathe in slowly through your nose and out through your mouth. It should be so quiet that you can hardly hear it. Let's all practice together. (Take a slow deep breathe.)

General Reflection Questions:
- When should we practice belly breathing?
- Do you feel better after practicing belly breathing? If yes, why might that be?
- Was learning how to belly breathe easy to learn, or did you have to practice a few times?

Arts/Crafts Reflection Questions:
- How might practicing belly breathing before an art project be helpful?
- How might belly breathing help during the project?

Games/Physical Activity Reflection Questions:
- How might belly breathing help before you start a game?
- Do you sometimes get frustrated during a game? Would belly breathing help?
- What are some other types of breathing that we know that help us calm down?

Pre-reading questions:
- Have you ever played in the snow?
- If you have, what does a snowy day look like? Smell like? Sound like? Taste like? If you've never experienced a snowy day, how do you imagine it looks, smells, sounds, and tastes?
- From looking at the cover of this book, where do you think this takes place?
- How does the cover of the book make you feel?
- Before reading, pay close attention to the things that the character hears and sees.

EZRA JACK KEATS
THE SNOWY DAY

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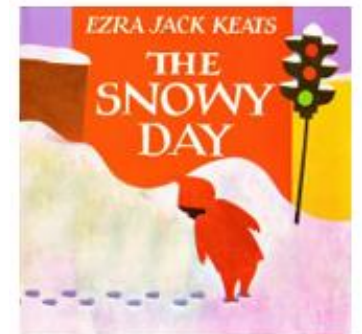
Guidance about how to integrate SEL into academics and regular classes lagged behind guidance about how to deliver stand-alone SEL lessons.

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Selected early lessons for other districts and OST providers to consider

- Provide clear guidance on SEL routines and rituals

- Protect time for SEL instruction

- Engage with curriculum experts to develop curriculum extensions to facilitate differentiation

- Build on educators' understanding of how SEL is consistent with good instruction

- Provide explicit guidance on integration

Implications

For district and OSTI leaders

- SEL vision and clear communication can strengthen implementation

- System leaders should communicate clearly with sites about desired practices

- Lack of time, staff turnover, and unexpected events might slow implementation

- PD should be ongoing, customized, and provided by experienced coaches

- OSTIs can help OST programs adopt and innovate SEL practices

For school and OST program leaders and staff

- Site leaders need to protect time for SEL

- Evidence-based curricula might not be effective if modified

- Site staff need guidance and resources for SEL integration

- SEL coaches are valuable

- School-OST partnerships benefit from time together and mutual respect

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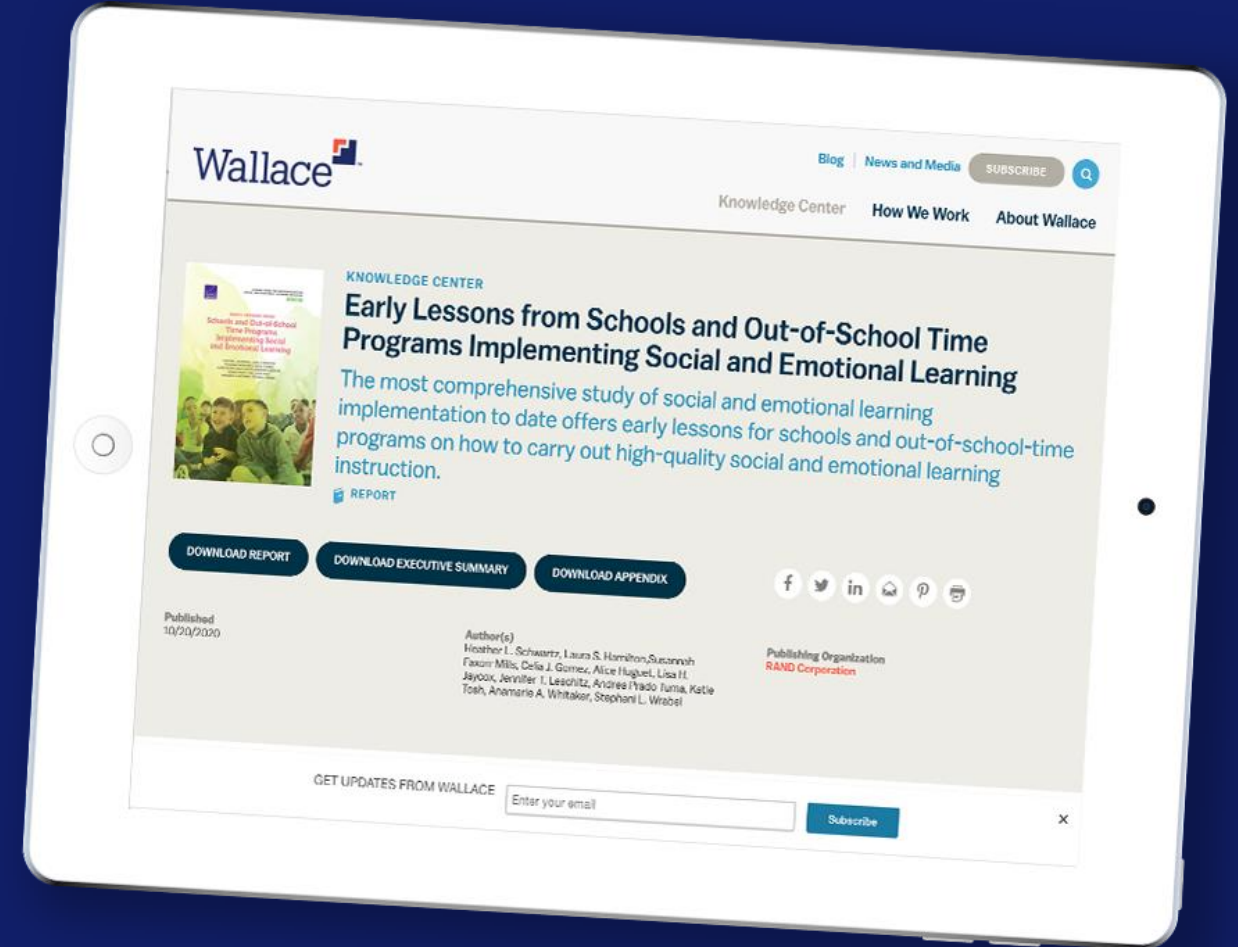# For policymakers, curriculum developers, TA providers, funders, SEAs

- Ambitious SEL efforts can take several years to implement well

- System leaders may need help developing effective communications strategies

- Schools and OST programs can benefit from collaborations with other organizations to develop SEL materials

- SEL coaches and other new roles can contribute to sustainability

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Questions?