

# What will it take to advance the science of learning and social and emotional development research, practice, and policy?

Earlier this year, researchers, practitioners, and funders representing two dozen organizations gathered in New Haven, CT for a full-day summit to construct a vision for the future of social and emotional learning science, practice, and policy.

Hosted by The Education Collaboratory at Yale, the Science Summit had three objectives:

-  Participants will engage in dialogue about how to advance the science of learning and social and emotional development research, practice, and policy.
-  Participants will make connections across the field to forge collaborative research partnerships and generate innovative research practices.
-  Participants will identify key priorities and action steps to move the field forward.

The day was organized around the guiding question: **How can we advance the science of learning and social and emotional development in a polarized socio-political landscape?** Through carefully facilitated discourse, essential next steps were identified in research, practice, and policy. In this brief, we share the findings from the day and offer a collective actionable agenda for the field.

Dr. Christina Cipriano, Director of the Education Collaboratory at Yale, presented a lightning talk of the latest science, followed by facilitating a dialogue with participants sharing insights from their work at the intersection of social and emotional learning science, practice, and policy. Their share-outs served as a springboard to prompt individual reflection, dialogue, and brainstorming.

Over the course of the Science Summit, padlets, or virtual post boards, were used to capture participants' thoughts and discussions. The afternoon transitioned to a two-year mapping of the future of SEL research and development and community dialogue on another big question: **What will it take to get there?** Participants contemplated and mapped goals based on a strategic timeline. The day concluded with a facilitated community discussion of key takeaways, while an artist sketched the conversation live for the participants.

The following recommendations summarize and synthesize takeaways from the activities described above and reflect many conversations throughout the day. These recommendations can guide planning, decision-making, and ongoing efforts in the rapidly evolving area of social and emotional learning in schools.

## Expand the Ecosystem of Stakeholders

Invite a diverse range of stakeholders with varying backgrounds, political views, and priorities into strategic conversation about social and emotional learning. This includes parents, community leaders, and policymakers, in addition to teachers and researchers. Listening to and learning from a broader spectrum of views and opinions will enrich understanding and implementation. Given the current political climate born from misinformation, promoting viewpoint diversity is especially important for maintaining a balanced and inclusive perspective. Results from a recent study by McCarthy and colleagues suggest that research evidence currently lacks accessibility for policy makers, educational leaders, and practitioners, and that the evidence that is available is limited in how it can be translated to and used in practice.

## Combat Misinformation and Expand Education

To counteract misinformation, emphasize its scientific foundation. Emphasizing science and its role in teaching, learning, and development can promote a broader understanding, dispel myths about social and emotional learning scope and intention, and provide stakeholders with accurate talking points. Other ways to expand education and information include integrating courses into teacher preparation programs, and developing an accessible, user-friendly repository of rigorous education research to support this effort. ImprovingStudentOutcomes.org is one such example of a repository of evidence designed with stakeholder engagement in mind.

## Engage Stakeholders in Creative Ways

Utilize a variety of mediums, including videos, blogs, and social media platforms (e.g., TikTok), to disseminate information and education. These channels offer greater accessibility and can reach a broader audience compared to traditional communication methods like academic journals and white papers. Launch social media campaigns and produce digestible research briefs—such as short videos, op-eds, podcasts, and infographics—that translate scientific findings into practical information. This approach will help educate and engage educators and policymakers more effectively.

## Prioritize Sustainability and Provide Adequate Support

Provide educators and others implementing approaches with the financial, personnel, logistical, and professional development support to successfully adopt and implement in their settings. In addition to sustained funding, this may include administrator buy-in and support, investing in ongoing professional development that is responsive to educator questions and needs, and time set aside for implementation and collaborative learning and sharing (e.g., Communities of Practice). For example, establish a mentorship network where experienced practitioners can guide new adopters, fostering a culture of shared learning.

## Include Communities – from Parents to Policymakers

Invest in relationship building by engaging communities to identify priorities and understand the values, needs, and questions of local stakeholders. Involve parents and community leaders in initiatives to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach. Listening to and learning from the community are essential for the successful implementation and acceptance. This process in and of itself is a manifestation of social and emotional learning, and by committing to true collaboration with community at the onset of implementation. Include the expertise of educators and consider convening regional roundtables with diverse stakeholders to facilitate knowledge sharing and strategize with policymakers to ensure a shared definitions and intentions.