

NC-DPI Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning (NC-DPI SEFEL)

April, 2013
Volume 1 Issue 1

North Carolina Early Learning Network (NC-ELN) funded by the Office of Early Learning in the Department of Public Instruction (DPI)

The School System Approach



NC-DPI SEFEL is funded through the 619 Preschool Disabilities grant to help improve child outcomes for PreK children with disabilities and to increase opportunities for instruction in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This initiative is intended for all collaborative partners who work with special education to implement inclusive preschool programs throughout North Carolina. Since 2009 the DPI Office of Early Learning has provided training, consultation, and on-going support for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to implement the SEFEL framework program-wide throughout the state.

Using an implementation science framework, the Office of Early Learning and the Early Learning Network staff works collaboratively with LEAs to

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“This initiative is intended for all collaborative partners who are implementing inclusive preschool programs in North Carolina

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What is SEFEL?

The foundation for this initiative is the pyramid model for supporting social-emotional competence in young children. Developed by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL), this tiered framework of evidence-based practices promotes healthy social emotional development for children birth through age 5 years. Using the SEFEL framework of strategies helps teaching staff build positive relationships with children and one another, create a supportive learning environment, teach children to understand and express their emotions, and how to solve social problems.

Findings suggest that high quality preschool programs implementing SEFEL over a period of time with a long term commitment of resources are likely

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What is Implementation Science?

Intervention fidelity is the degree to which interventions are accurately and consistently carried out as designed.

“You can have a wonderfully powerful drug, but it does no good if you don’t give it with the right dosage”

The Office of Special Education Programs in the US Department of Education has funded a technical assistance center to assist states in scaling up high quality, evidence based practices. The center is called State Implementation and Scaling- Up of Evidence Based Practices Center (SISEP). Through this centers research, and the work of the National CSEFEL Center, we have come to understand that it takes much more than a workshop to truly effect change of practice in the classroom. What does it take to effect change?

- It takes time
- It takes resources
- It takes training
- It takes coaching
- It takes data
- It takes administrative leadership
- It takes families

Implementation, as defined by Wallace, Blasé, Fixse and Naoom (2008), is a specified set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions. Implementation of the SEFEL framework requires an intentional plan of activities over the course of a five year period. Stages of implementation, including exploration and adoption, program installation, initial implementation, and full implementation, as well as corresponding implementation steps for our SEFEL project are:

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assist them in designing a 3 to 5 year SEFEL program-wide implementation plan. LEAs are required to form leadership teams that develop and oversee the plan, and designate staff members that will act as classroom coaches and trainers. The Early Learning Network staff will provide training to the LEA trainers and coaches, in addition to attending key leadership team meetings.

Targeted funding is provided to offset the cost of travel associated with professional development for the trainers and coaches, child assessments, and to support the SEFEL professional learning community process by providing substitutes for classroom teachers.

Is this Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) for Preschool?

Both PBIS and SEFEL are tiered intervention models that focus on prevention of problem behaviors, explicit teaching of strategies for social-emotional development, data-based decision making, and administrative participation and support. SEFEL places more emphasis on the role of adults supporting children in managing their own behavior, given that the preschooler's brain is still developing self-regulation. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction developed a chart to compare the PBIS and SEFEL approaches in *"Linking Pyramid Model Program Wide Implementation and School Wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support"* at this link:

<http://ec.dpi.wi.gov/files/sped/pdf/ecspedldr-pyramid-pbis.pdf>



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to experience the following positive outcomes:

- Reduced challenging behavior in children
- Increased social skills
- Increased satisfaction of program staff and families
- Reduced turnover in the program
- Increased teacher competence and confidence in the support of children
- Sustained implementation of the Pyramid Model.

"Implementation of SEFEL reduces challenging behavior in children and increases their social skills"

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1. Exploration and Adoption of SEFEL. The LEA explores the potential match between SEFEL and its own program's needs in order to make the decision to move forward.
 - Administrators attend an overview of SEFEL
 - LEA identifies a SEFEL leader and members of a SEFEL leadership team
 - LEA announces the desire to begin a program-wide initiative by signing a written assurance document that outlines requirements for the LEA and DPI.
2. Program Installation. The LEA identifies and puts in place the structural supports necessary to initiate SEFEL.
 - The leadership team selects high performing classroom teachers and support staff that will become the targeted classrooms
 - The leadership team designates SEFEL coaches and trainers
 - Teachers, coaches, trainers and leadership team members attend NC-DPI SEFEL training.
3. Initial Implementation. Facilitative leadership supports change in practice.
 - The LEA's SEFEL trainers conduct training for classroom staff
 - The LEA's SEFEL coaches visit classrooms to assist teaching staff with the implementation of SEFEL strategies
4. Full Implementation. SEFEL becomes integrated into practitioner, organization, and community practices.
 - The leadership team creates regularly meeting Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to support staff implementing SEFEL and to educate others about the framework
 - The leadership team meets regularly to develop and implement a 5 year program wide implementation plan as guided by the *Early Childhood Program-Wide PBS Benchmarks of Quality* (Fox, Hemmeter, and Jack, 2010).
 - SEFEL is expanded into all LEA preschool classrooms
 - With coaching, teachers reach and maintain fidelity to the SEFEL framework as measured by the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)
 - Children increase social skills and decrease problem behaviors as measured by the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS)
 - Training and coaching are available to all new classroom staff and administration as turnover and program growth occurs
 - The LEA ensures funding to sustain the SEFEL framework at high fidelity.

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Reference: Wallace, F., Blasé, Fixsen, D., and Naoom, S. (2008). Implement the findings of research: bridging the gap between knowledge and practice. Educational Research Service. Alexandria, VA.

Reference: <http://sisep.fpg.unc.edu/learning-zone/science-of-implementation>