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# PREFACE

## *To the SEL Coach*

**W**hether you have been in the role of SEL coach for a while or whether you are brand-new to the position, the intent of this book is to provide you with resources and ideas for moving your SEL implementation to the next level. SEL coaches come from various backgrounds and experiences. To understand and identify with the teachers and students you work with, it is important to draw from your own previous experiences. This will help to develop empathy between you and others. Use your past work and personal experiences not only to identify effective models of systems change but also to connect with those you are collaborating with. Be open and honest with others as you continue to work on these competencies and qualities.

Being in the role of SEL coach or SEL lead implementer can be a challenge with very few resources to help you on your journey. You may be wondering how to be an SEL coach or what should a lead implementer do? This also may be your only role or a role that you do in combination with other roles. As you will learn in this book, the SEL coach/lead implementer (which will be shortened to SEL coach) is most like a systems coach. Because social and emotional competencies affect everyone in the system, a coach is there to guide all educational stakeholders in practices that support these skills. For example, for a student to learn how to manage their stress, they should be taught how to do it. But learning does not stop there, it should then be practiced with other peers and adults. And then adults should be able to model stress management. We should also be able to support each other in managing our stress, if needed, through social support. There are individual, group, and systemic elements to mastering this skill. The SEL coach would identify areas of need and work with the students and adults to develop solutions to systemic problems. “System coaching can include coaching at the individual, small group, and organizational levels, depending upon the need and level of the educational organization. Further, systems coaching activities can include those activities in which educators with content knowledge expertise provide support directly to teachers for instructional design and delivery to students” (March & Gaunt, 2013, p. 3).

In addition to coaching competencies, it is also important to be aware of the coaching qualities needed to be a successful coach. Being an SEL leader

means being knowledgeable in multiple areas to ensure the best chance of choosing the right implementation for your system. Coaching has been a part of the educational system for years. There are many individuals who describe the competencies that a coach must possess. The one that is most applicable and provides a systems-level view is identified by Zins and Erchul (2002). The competencies include self-awareness or the awareness of one's interpersonal style. This is critical when approaching someone as a coach. Self-awareness allows for the understanding of one's assets and challenges. This includes qualities such as good interpersonal skills; knowledge of intervention technology (content expertise); understanding of the influence of school climate, norms, and values on the coaching process; and sensitivity to cultural diversity and awareness of sociocultural factors (Zins & Erchul, 2002).

## QUALITIES OF A COACH

1. Demonstrates knowledge of core concepts (teachers can be a tough audience: need to know that you know something due to experience, intensive knowledge that can add value to their work)
2. Demonstrates flexibility and collaboration working with a team
3. Understands and can apply that knowledge of theory into practices
4. Possesses knowledge of state and federal laws
5. Has an understanding of the roles/responsibilities of staff in the school environment
6. Has the ability to adapt to different leadership styles and build relationships with principals and staff
7. Has the ability to collect and interpret data to inform systems change

Each SEL coach's experience will be different. Just like the unique environments you will be working in, your role may look different than other SEL coaches. The purpose of this book is for you to have many different practices and processes for you to use that will help your system implement SEL effectively. The information and exercises provided here will give you tools to navigate your unique community and role within it to provide solutions that will meet your specific needs. The purpose of this book is to support you in your role as an SEL coach by giving you practices and processes to try in your unique school culture.

## BEGINNING STEPS: TO-DO CHECKLIST

You may want to know, what should I do RIGHT NOW. This list is to help you with some ideas to start the activities and practices of being an SEL coach before getting too deep into the book. Here is a list of ideas to begin your journey as an SEL coach.

## SEL Coach To-Do List: Where to Start

- ☐ Introduce self to school: include roles, responsibilities, and contact information
- ☐ Set up a regular meeting with the principal and appropriate administration (weekly or biweekly)
- ☐ Connect with staff
  - Attend grade-level or subject team meetings
  - In the staff break room
  - At out-of-school activities
  - Meet and greet new staff members personally
- ☐ Plan schedule
- ☐ Plan for options for PD with teachers
- ☐ Make schedule public
- ☐ Create coaching log
- ☐ Find ways to be invited into the classroom
  - Talk to staff about common problems
  - Listen to them
  - Offer a collaboration time sign-up
  - Go in with staff members with whom you already have a relationship
  - Email staff to offer support
- ☐ Create or meet with the SEL team and add new members if necessary
- ☐ Update your contact information on any websites with new job responsibilities
- ☐ Schedule any planned PD for the year
- ☐ Determine data collection plan
- ☐ Begin self-care planning for staff
- ☐ Review available resources and materials
- ☐ Connect to all tech sources used by the building
- ☐ Consider optimal communications with other stakeholders: email, newsletters, etc.