Summary Report

**Review & Evaluation of the
SEL Competency-Referenced Performance Framework
and
Cut Scores for Performance Levels
for use with the
SSIS SEL Brief Scales**

**SAIL Colab
July 10, 2020**

Purposes of the CRPF Review & Evaluation Study

The Review & Evaluation Study of the Competency-Referenced Performance Framework (CRPF) was part of an effort to set levels of performance that meaningfully describe the social emotional learning (SEL) competencies of preschool to 12th grade students. We conceptualized the study as being similar to a traditional standard setting procedure where cut scores are established and used to differentiate test performances of students in a manner useful for guiding instruction.

To accomplish the goal of this study, we asked a group of professionals knowledgeable of SEL to:

1. Review materials describing the SSIS SEL Brief Scales' Competency-Referenced Performance Framework (CRPF) for clarity and completeness.

2. Evaluate the validity and fairness of the CRPF's performance level cut score ranges for use with children ages 3 through 18.

3. Document their perceptions of the CRPF and the use of a competency-based approach to interpreting the social emotional functioning of students.

4. Verify their level of support for use of the CRPF to interpret scores from the SSIS SEL Brief Scales.

We use the terms "validity" and "fairness" as defined and conceptualized by the AERA, APA, NCME (2014) *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*. In brief, validity refers to "the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of test scores for proposed uses of tests" (p. 11). Fairness is a fundamental validity issue and is characterized as "responsiveness to individual characteristics and testing contexts so that test scores will yield valid interpretations for intended uses" (p. 50).

Participation in the Review & Evaluation

A sample of 17 professionals were invited to participate. Of these individuals, 3 declined do to time constraints or an employment governing policy prohibiting use of their affiliation when reviewing commercial materials. The 14 participants represented SEL researchers at universities, educational leaders in school districts, practicing school psychologists, and teachers familiar with SEL assessment and intervention programs. Names and affiliations of these participants are documented in Appendix A.

Participation in the study was voluntary and required permission to publish names and affiliations of each participant. The activity required approximately an hour to review materials about the SSIS SEL Brief Scales and the CRPF, followed by completing a short survey about the CRPF and Performance Cut Scores.

Figure 1. The demographic characteristics of study participants.

Characteristic	Percentage
Gender	
Female	79
Male	21
Ethnicity	
Hispanic	7
Not Hispanic	93
Race	
White	79
Black	14
Other	7
Highest Education Completed	
Bachelor's Degree	14
Master's/Specialist Degree	36
Doctoral Degree	50
Professional Role	
General Education Teacher	21
School Psychologist	36
School Administrator	7
Educational Researcher	21
Other	14
Current Employment Setting	
College/University	29
K-12 Schools	64
State Department of Education	7

Each participant received a packet of materials via email and was asked to work independently to review the materials and then respond to a Qualtrics Survey. The survey was designed so that each item had to be responded to before submittal was possible. Most participants completed the required activities within 10 days of receipt of the materials.

At the conclusion of the study, participants were asked to provide advice regarding the CRPF and Performance Cut Score use with students in schools where CASEL aligned SEL programs are operating. Persons completing the study received a $50 gift card.

Overview of the Competency-Referenced Performance Framework

The SEL Competency-Referenced Performance Framework is a strength-focused and characterizes clusters of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship, and responsible decision making skills into four performance levels: *Emerging*, *Developing*, *Competent*, and *Advanced*. The overall competency framework and each of the four performance level descriptors follow:

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and youth exhibit competencies to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Four levels of performance are useful for describing the exhibition and use of these five SEL competencies across the developmental period from kindergarten to the 12th grade. These levels from lowest to highest are Emerging, Developing, Competent, and Advanced.

The content of the SSIS SEL Brief Scales are aligned with this competency-referenced performance framework so that scores on these scales provide evidence that can be used to place a student's current SEL functioning on one of these performance levels.

Advanced Level

Students at this performance level **almost always** exhibit all the following competencies appropriately and independently in nearly all social situations:

- Accurately recognize one's emotions, thoughts, and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations, and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

- Regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.

- Take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

- Establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.

- Make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

Competent Level

Students at this performance level **often** exhibit nearly all of the following competencies appropriately and with minimal or no prompting in most social situations:

- Accurately recognize one's emotions, thoughts, and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations, and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

- Regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.

- Take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

- Establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.

- Make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

Developing Level

Students at this performance level **often** exhibit some, but **seldom** exhibit most of the following competencies appropriately and without prompting in a number of social situations:

- Recognize one's emotions, thoughts, and their influence on behavior. This includes assessing one's strengths and limitations, and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

- Attempt to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes trying to manage stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.

- Try to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

- Make an effort to establish healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating, listening, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, trying to negotiate conflict, and seeking and offering help when needed.

- Work to make good choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of safety concerns, school or home rules, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

Emerging Level

Students at this performance level **never or very seldom** exhibit many of these competencies appropriately or independently, but can exhibit some skills with direct prompting in a few social situations:

- Recognize one's emotions and thoughts. This includes assessing one's strengths and limitations, and possessing some sense of confidence.

- Attempt to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in a few situations. This includes trying to manage stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and working toward a goal.

- Try to take the perspective of others who are different, understand rules for behavior, and recognize family and school supports.

- Make an effort to have healthy relationships with others who are different. This includes communicating, listening, cooperating, trying to negotiate conflict, and seeking and offering help when needed.

- Work to make good choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of safety concerns, school or home rules, consequences of one's own actions, and the well-being of self and others.

Study Results

	Average Response	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)
The 4-point frequency scale (Never, Seldom, Often, Almost Always) used to rate the SSIS SEL Brief Scales – Teacher and Parent Form items is appropriate for characterizing SEL competence.	3.50	0%	0%	50%	50%
The 4-point scale (Not True, A Little True, A Lot True, Very True) used to rate the SSIS SEL Brief Scales – Student Form items is appropriate for characterizing SEL competence.	3.21	0%	21%	36%	43%
The content of the Competency-Referenced Performance Framework (CRPF) is well aligned with the CASEL Competency Framework.	3.57	0%	0%	43%	57%
The method of generating cut score ranges used by the SSIS SEL Brief Scales is appropriate.	3.36	0%	0%	64%	36%
The use of the same cut score ranges across the SSIS SEL Brief Scales Teacher, Student, and Parent forms is appropriate.	3.29	0%	0%	71%	29%
The names of the CRPF performance levels (Emerging, Developing, Competent, and Advanced) are informative.	3.50	0%	7%	36%	57%
The CRPF Performance Levels facilitate communication with key stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, teachers)	3.57	0%	0%	43%	57%
The CRPF Performance Levels are more informative for instructional and intervention planning than normative scoring frameworks such as standard scores and percentile ranks.	3.43	0%	0%	57%	43%

	Average Response	I do not approve (1)	I approve with minor modifications (2)	I approve as written (3)
Competency-Referenced Performance Levels	2.64	0%	36%	64%
Performance Level Score Ranges	2.93	0%	7%	92%

Conclusions

The participants' responses to the survey items and their level of approval of our the CRPF were very supportive. As a result, the CRPF was accepted for interpreting the scores from the SSIS SEL Brief Scales. A detailed description of the use of the CRPF to transform composite SEL raw scores to an SEL competency level is provided in the SSIS SEL Brief Scales *User Guide & Technical Manual.* In particular, Appendix B in that manual documents the transformation of composite scores to competency levels for each of the SSIS SEL Brief Scales forms by grade clusters.

The CRPF's application to interpreting scores from other SSIS SEL assessments, as well as measures independent of the SSIS family of assessments is being studied. Given its alignment with the widely used CASEL Competency Framework, the potential for application with other assessments used for large-scale SEL screening seems reasonable.

Appendix A

Study Participants and Their Affiliations

Charles Barrett, Lead School Psychologist, Loudoun County Public Schools, VA

Paul Bauer, Director of Instruction & Assessment, Traverse Bay Area ISD (MI)

Kristy Brann, Assistant Professor, Miami University

Christina Cipriano, Assistant Professor, Yale Child Study Center

Susanne A. Denham, Professor Emeritus, George Mason University

Julie Gintzler, Elementary Teacher, School City of Hammond, IN

Cheon Graham, Psychologist / Psychological Services, Guilford County Schools, NC

Gordon E. Hall, Systems Psychologist, Mifflin County School District, PA

Susan Hart, Middle School Teacher & Certified School Psychologist, State College, PA

Beth Herman, Wisconsin Educator

Melissa R. Hubbard, Elementary Teacher, School City of Hammond, IN

Jessica L. Jonson, Research Associate Professor, Buros Center on Testing, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Sunshine Miranda, Elementary Teacher, School City of Hammond, IN

Colleen Rackley-Heck, School Psychologist, Jersey City, NJ