CHAPTER 33

Accountability and SEL Programs

The Getting To Outcomes® Approach

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Suppose you are a school superintendent. You have heard about social and emotional learning (SEL) programming and are considering whether to institute it in your schools. Like others around the country, you are trying to do more with less. You have competing priorities and limited resources. Programs designed to prevent bullying, substance abuse, dropout, and obesity are areas of concern, and academic achievement and high-stakes testing remain a paramount consideration. This is a common scenario in modern education systems: School leaders are regularly faced with competing priorities. Given multiple needs, how do school leaders decide which needs to prioritize, and how to address these needs? In this era of accountability, with an emphasis on evidence-based interventions and data-driven decision making, how do schools demonstrate the appropriateness of interventions that support academics and show effectiveness in ways that augment standardized tests?

In this chapter, we introduce the Getting To Outcomes®(GTO®) approach to support districts in bringing effective and evidence-based programs to individual schools. GTO[1] is a system of accountability that helps address key questions for school-based interventions, including "*What* are our schools needs and *what* are our goals?"; "*Which* program should we implement in our school, and *why*?"; "*How* will we know whether it worked?" (Wandersman, Imm, Chinman, & Kaftarian, 2000). GTO is a systematic process that can be used to support schools in selecting, implementing, and evaluating school-based programs that meet their individual needs and resources. As a flexible approach, GTO can be used across content areas (e.g., SEL; Common Core State Standards; 21st Century Learning Skills; science, technology engineering, and mathematics [STEM]; and technology integration, including 1:1 Computing; Wandersman & Hamm, 2014). In this chapter, we introduce how GTO thinking can be applied to SEL programs in school settings. We start with an overview of the GTO approach and note some key features that make GTO particularly useful for the implementation of evidence-based programs in schools, and illustrate how the GTO system can be integrated with the Theory of Action developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], (2012).

Then, we discuss how GTO thinking can specifically support schools in reaching desired SEL-related outcomes.

Each description of the GTO steps includes an example from the Cleveland, Ohio, Metropolitan School District to illustrate how the district's efforts can be viewed through a GTO perspective. This district was chosen because, although it did not explicitly use GTO, it went through each of the GTO steps in its efforts to improve outcomes. Among the value-added features of GTO that we address throughout this chapter are its intuitive, dynamic nature and practitioner-friendly language; the way it resonates with practitioners, evaluators, and quality improvement scientists; its comprehensiveness (10 steps); and its evidence base in quasi-experimental studies (e.g., Chinman et al., 2008; Chinman, Tremain, Imm, & Wandersman, 2010).

GTO: 10 Accountability Questions

GTO consists of 10 accountability questions, or "steps" (see Table 33.1) assessing needs and resources (GTO Step 1); setting goals and desired outcomes (GTO Step 2); selection of an evidence-based (or promising) program (GTO Step 3); assessing program fit (GTO Step 4); assessing organizational–community capacities forthe chosen best practice(s) (GTO Step 5); planning (GTO Step 6); implementation and process evaluation (GTO Step 7); outcome evaluation (GTO Step 8); continuous quality improvement (GTO Step 9); and sustainability (GTO Step 10). Empirical data demonstrate the effectiveness of GTO thinking in field settings (see, e.g., Chinman et al., 2008; Fisher, Imm, Chinman, & Wandersman, 2006; Imm, Chinman, & Wandersman, 2006; Lesesne et al., 2008).

TABLE 33.1. Relationship between GTO Steps and CASEL's Theory of Action

GTO 10 accountability questions	CASEL's theory of action for systemic SEL
1. *Needs and Resources:* What are the underlying needs and conditions in the community (district/school)?	Conduct an SEL-related resource and needs inventory.
2. *Goals:* What are the goals, target populations, and objectives (i.e., desired outcomes)?	
3. *Best Practices:* Which evidence-based models and best practice programs can be useful in reaching the goals?	Adopt evidence-based SEL programs.
4. *Fit:* What actions need to be taken so the selected program "fits" the community context?	Establish a shared SEL vision with all stakeholders.
5. *Capacities:* What organizational capacities are needed to implement the plan?	Provide ongoing professional development.
6. *Plan:* What is the plan for this program?	Develop an implementation plan.
7. *Implementation and Process Evaluation:* How will the quality of program implementation be monitored and assessed?	Integrate schoolwide policies and activities to foster the social, emotional, and academic learning of all students.
8. *Outcome Evaluation:* How well did the program work?	
9. *CQI:* How will continuous quality improvement strategies be incorporated?	Use data to improve practice.
10. *Sustain:* If the program is successful, how will it be sustained?	

In this chapter, we focus our examples on a district-level initiative; however, these accountability questions could also be applied to multiple levels of a school system. District staff members could address broad needs across multiple schools, perhaps adopting SEL programming in all schools. Individual schools could also answer the questions for their schools, classrooms, or certain populations (e.g., students with emotional disabilities; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics [STEM] teachers) within their school. The reader is encouraged to think broadly about how the accountability questions could be addressed at the level most relevant for his or her particular needs.

Empirical data support the use of GTO thinking in field settings. Chinman and colleagues (2008) tested the effectiveness of using GTO to improve prevention capacities and prevention programming outcomes of community coalitions in a 2-year longitudinal trial funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Results indicated significant improvements in staff capacity and program performance in programs using GTO versus comparison programs. Greater exposure to GTO was associated with greater gains in prevention capacity. GTO has also been applied to other domains, including positive youth development (Fisher et al., 2006), preventing underage drinking (Imm et al., 2006), and teen pregnancy prevention (Lesesne et al., 2008).

Features of the GTO System of Accountability

There are features of the GTO approach that make it particularly relevant for school-based programming. First, GTO is a *process-oriented* way of achieving results, which means that it focuses on the ways that outcomes can be realistically achieved. This is particularly important in school systems with ongoing competing priorities, limited resources, multiple programs, and the need to show effectiveness. Second, GTO is a flexible approach that can be used with programs at any stage of their life cycle (e.g., at the beginning of a program or with a mature program). Third, GTO is designed to be customized to your setting. The aim is to achieve outcomes for *your* students, in *your* schools, and in *your* community, taking into account what you are already doing and what is already working.

GTO Is a Process-Oriented Approach

The traditional approach to evaluation typically focuses on summative evaluation (i.e., evaluators assess whether stated outcomes were achieved at the conclusion of an intervention). By itself, this approach has three notable limitations: (1) The end product message tends to be a simple dichotomous "It worked" or "It did not work," which does not provide sufficient data for improvement; (2) it does not increase the likelihood of reaching desired outcomes by encouraging midcourse corrections, if needed, during the implementation process; and (3) it is ill-suited to determine the reasons for a lack of outcomes. A failure to achieve desired outcomes could occur for multiple reasons, including problems with the program theory (e.g., "Does the model of the solution fit the model of the problem?"; "Is the theory of change for the program accurate?") or problems due to poor-quality implementation of the program (e.g., "Was the implementation of an effective program performed in a low-quality way?").

In contrast, GTO adopts an approach to program evaluation that views the summative evaluation as a necessary yet insufficient component for a full picture of program effectiveness. Outcome evaluation is one component of the broader GTO system of accountability, which uses evaluation data *throughout the life cycle of the program*. This approach provides information about programmatic effectiveness along the way, rather than waiting until the end of the program (when resources and time may have already been exhausted) to see whether the program worked.

A GTO-type approach is particularly important for implementing large-scale programs in school settings for a few key reasons. First, in public education settings, programs that fail to show desired outcomes are often quickly cast aside in favor of the next big idea. This cycling through interventions exhausts resources at multiple levels (e.g., fiscal capacities of the district are drained, school resources for training and supporting new initiatives are reduced,

and teachers become overwhelmed with changing demands or skeptical about the utility of investing their efforts in another "flavor of the month"). By planning for accountability at the outset of a project, the GTO process helps schools advocate for sustained support for implementation, so that programs are not ended prematurely, before potential outcomes can be achieved and documented. Second, in the context of budget uncertainties, districts and schools must become skilled in justifying previous and future investments to potential funders. Here, GTO can be used to (1) prospectively justify program planning and/or (2) retrospectively evaluate programs that have been operating (e.g., fulfill requirements in grant applications or in justification for continuing funding). Finally, an overreliance on summative evaluation approaches, that is, simply determining *whether* stated outcomes were met, with less attention paid to *how* changes were made, means that schools and districts limit organizational learning. Schools or districts that focus only on *what* happened miss out on learning about *how* it happened, so that they can make it happen *better* in the future.

GTO Can Be Used at Any Stage of a Program's Life Cycle

Though movement through the GTO steps was written sequentially, starting with Step 1 and ending with Step 10, this logical sequence often does not accurately reflect the typical process of program adoption and implementation. Schools are in a constant process of programming a number of innovations and reforms simultaneously, and often are expected to implement a program or evaluate the effectiveness of a preexisting program without sufficient attention to earlier steps of the GTO sequence. GTO was designed to address these real-world demands.

GTO is like a "painter's palette," with users' application of (*painting with*) different steps (*colors*) of the process depending on their specific needs (see Figure 33.1). A common reality is that an evidence-based program is chosen, perhaps due to federal grant guidelines or by a state education office, and districts are instructed to implement the chosen program. Although data-informed decisions may have taken place at the state or federal level, it is often the case that this chain of command effectively

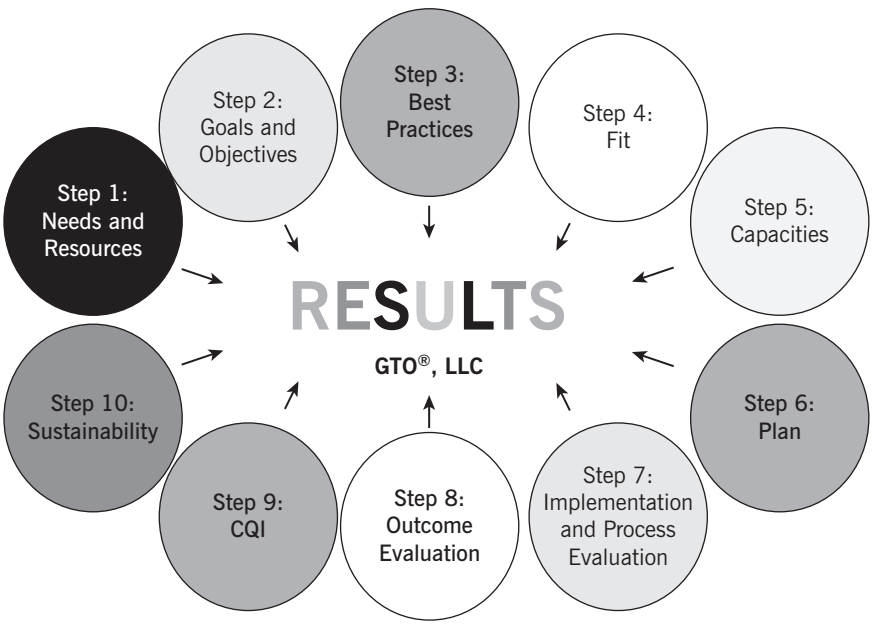

FIGURE 33.1. GTO as a painter's palette.

skips over a district or even school-specific needs assessment, determination of fit for the particular setting, and assessment of whether the school has the requisite capacity to implement the chosen program with fidelity to the program's model. In this situation, GTO may be effectively used by allowing schools to "jump" to Steps 6 through 10, choosing to focus on how they will plan for and monitor the implementation of the required program, what the setting-specific outcomes of the program will be, and how they can improve and sustain it in their own setting.

GTO Is Community and School Centered

The GTO approach addresses a limitation of the traditional research-to-practice model: that evidence-based programs are expected to generalize automatically across persons and settings of the target population (Wandersman et al., 2008). Often, there are substantial differences between program outcomes observed in a controlled research trial and outcomes observed when the same program is implemented in the "real world." The problem with the assumption of "generalizability" (that a program that worked under tight research circumstances should work anywhere) is that districts and schools differ from one another, and given competing priorities, diverse skills sets, and nuances of climate and culture in each setting, many schools are unable or unwilling to allocate the same level of resources and supervision to program implementation used during the efficacy trial. GTO recognizes that districts, schools, and classrooms are the real-world laboratory in which programs must be implemented.

Second, GTO acknowledges that no two schools or school districts are exactly the same. The GTO process advocates for individualized, yet accountable, solutions to adapting a program or practice to an individual district's or school's needs. Programs that are able to adapt the varying needs, resources, and attitudes of the school, while also maintaining adequate fidelity to program content and delivery features, are more likely to achieve outcomes (Osher, Dwyer, & Jackson, 2004). For example, some schools adopt the GTO process "in house," receiving brief training and technical assistance, whereas others may collaborate with outside evaluators or consultants to utilize the GTO system in their SEL initiative. GTO thinking helps school and district leaders and teams adopt evidence-based practices that suit their needs and fit within their broader school and district context, while simultaneously supporting schools and districts in using data to reach their desired outcomes.

GTO with SEL Programs

School systems in the 21st century bear the societal responsibility of fostering students' cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Because of schools' unique amount of access to youth over formative developmental years, they are often *the* delivery system for a wide range of services. An increasing body of research and practice indicates that academic outcomes improve when schools build student social and emotional competence, address their health needs, and build strong conditions for learning (Osher & Kendziora, 2010; Osher, Sprague, et al., 2008).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is leading some of the field's work in assessing SEL programs that simultaneously shape multiple student and teacher skills sets, spanning the full range of student academic, social, and emotional competencies (*www.casel.org*). CASEL (2012) has identified 18 programs for elementary school students that, when implemented well, are likely to address SEL needs in many schools. Positive outcomes include higher average student scores on standardized tests, better mental health outcomes, such as improved self-esteem and lower depression and anxiety, as well as increased engagement in school (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

Below, we illustrate how GTO thinking can be applied to address SEL-specific needs. The questions inherent in the GTO accountability system overlap substantially with the CASEL (2012) theory of action, allowing the GTO process to be easily used as an additional resource by districts using or seeking to use CASEL resources (see Table 33.1).

GTO can be utilized at multiple levels of the school system (e.g., school districts, individual schools, individual classrooms/teachers, and individual students) to achieve SEL outcomes. In this chapter, we focus on applications at the district level. We show how one district selected, implemented, and utilized data to improve the implementation of evidence-based SEL programming as part of a comprehensive set of SEL and student support interventions aimed at building student and adult competencies, district capacity, and conditions for learning. We focus on one intervention, Providing Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), which was Cleveland's first intentional effort at universal SEL, and which functioned as an anchor for other SEL programming. Cleveland implemented PATHS as part of a large holistic SEL program that eventually included preparation for the middle-grade curriculum Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating (RULER) emotion effects (Rivers, Brackett, Reyes, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012); implementation of SEL support in school "planning centers"; a safe haven for kids who need additional support; implementation of the Ripple Effects Whole Spectrum Intervention System (2009), an individualized SEL support tool; and implementation of school-based student support teams.

We chose Cleveland's PATHS program as an illustration because

1. One of us (D. O.) worked with the district's Chief Executive Officer (E. S. G.) in the planning and evaluation, and this firsthand experience provides important information about how each GTO step might work in your schools.
2. Cleveland faced the challenges of many urban, suburban, and rural districts, including funding changes, community buy-in, and the need to fit SEL programming into complex existing initiatives. The district collaborated with community stakeholders and external evaluators to develop creative and strategic plans for overcoming these challenges; we think this information will be valuable for other districts and schools grappling with similar issues.
3. It provides an example of how GTO steps can be used retrospectively. The GTO approach can be used *prospectively* to help a project or initiative be accountable and increase the probability of achieving results. Indeed, this was the original purpose of developing GTO. The use of the Cleveland example is a *retrospective* use of GTO for the purpose of illustrating what the GTO steps might look like in an SEL example. GTO was not formally applied either retrospectively nor prospectively in Cleveland. Nevertheless, application of the steps to the PATHS example will be useful to the reader to get a "real-life" example of how each GTO step could work for a complex SEL intervention.

Use of the GTO Accountability Process for Achieving SEL Outcomes in Schools

GTO Step 1: What are the underlying needs and conditions in your district (NEEDS AND RESOURCES)? Needs and resources assessments gather information about a district's most salient needs, as well as potential resources for addressing those needs. Comprehensive needs and resources assessments involve the identification of individual, school, and community strengths that may be able to address (or may already be addressing) identified needs. When framed as an assessment of existing resources and identified gaps in needed services, the needs assessment process itself can be seen as the first step to galvanizing community and school district support for an SEL program. An important part of the needs assessment process for school districts includes determining differences in school and student needs across the district; when it comes to choosing SEL programming, one size may not fit all.

Background of the Cleveland Example. Following a Fall 2007 school shooting that involved the death of the shooter, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (the District) and the Mayor of Cleveland asked the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct an analysis and make recommendations regarding what could be done in Cleveland's schools and by its mental health and other community agencies to improve the connectedness that

students have to school, as well as their mental wellness and safety. The Chief Academic Officer (who led this District's work) and the Mayor wanted an actionable study that could drive change and assured AIR that the District would use the needs and resource assessment and evidenced-based recommendations to plan for and drive change. AIR conducted a study to look at systemic issues, and the strengths and needs as in different contexts. AIR provided 10 recommendations that could be implemented over a 5-year period (Osher, Poirer, et al., 2008). Cleveland subsequently asked AIR to help the district implement the recommendations and created a team, the Humanware Executive Team, which comprised student support staff members and teachers' union members, and reported to the Chief Academic Officer. AIR provided advice on principles of implementation and consultation to a number of stakeholders, including the Executive Team that oversaw planning and implementation of SEL programming, Community–School Task Forces, and the Chief Academic Officer.

GTO Step 1 is designed to ensure that the programs adopted by a district fit the needs of particular schools and are nonredundant with other existing programs. A first question, simply, is do our students need additional SEL programming *at all*? If district leadership—perhaps in collaboration with teachers, parents, and other community leaders—has determined that an SEL intervention is indeed warranted, a follow-up question involves a more detailed inquiry into what *specific* needs and resources exist. Described elsewhere in this handbook are specific strategies for assessing (1) students' skills sets related to the five domains of SEL and (2) teachers' pedagogical skills related specifically to SEL competencies. Ideally, a district will assess the needs and resources related to both students' and teachers' skills sets.

Cleveland Example. The Cleveland needs assessment recommended systemic classroom-based SEL instruction, a supportive school climate, coordinated mental health and health services, school–family–community partnerships, and after-school and community programming. AIR based these recommendations on a gap analysis and asset mapping that included a districtwide Conditions for Learning Survey (Osher & Kendziora, 2010). Survey data, case studies in randomly sampled schools, and focus groups conducted with randomly selected students, families, and teachers helped AIR identify (1) high levels of student need, (2) program allocation based on adult instead of student need, and (3) multiple interventions that were currently being implemented, often with insufficient monitoring, quality, and coordination. These included intervention-based assistance teams, a series of unaligned behavioral interventions, mental health services, and well-intended but uncoordinated and insufficiently evaluated community support programs.

Although a needs assessment specifically related to students' acquisition of SEL's five key skills might be most pertinent to a given school district's adoption of a SEL intervention, often program adoption does not follow this sequence. It is more likely that, just as in Cleveland, a number of ongoing innovations and related evaluations are taking place concurrently across a district, or that SEL programming itself might be one component of a larger intervention. Instead of being a problem, this allows needs assessments conducted for other purposes to be utilized in justifying whether an SEL intervention is needed. Given the underlying rationale that SEL competencies can improve academic achievement, even data demonstrating disparities in achievement indicators can be connected to the need for SEL intervention. In this instance, a district leadership team might ask: What data do we already have that point to the need for SEL programming in our schools?

GTO Step 2: What are the goals, target populations, and objectives (i.e., desired outcomes) (GOALS)? Step 2 builds on the information collected in the needs assessment in Step 1 and asks: What should change, for whom, and by when? This involves first *creating goals and objectives* (or desired outcomes) for each prioritized need identified in Step 1. Goals are broad statements of what the school would like to achieve in the long term. Objectives or desired outcomes are concrete statements about what will change as a result of the program. Clearly specified objectives indicate how the suc-

cess of the program will be measured. The CASEL (2012) program guide provides an initial framework for charting what objectives/desired outcomes may be expected for your chosen program(s). Even if you do not choose a program from this list, your objectives and outcomes will likely have substantial overlap with the ones listed here.

In addition to identifying the changes that district leaders would like to see, this step involves clear specification of the *target population for services*. In a school, this may involve *all* students (e.g., universal prevention), specific schools within the district (e.g., feeder schools for a high school), specific grade levels within schools (e.g., all fifth-grade students), or specific types of students (e.g., special education or gifted students). Explicit attention to the population of interest *prior* to selecting an evidence-based practice (Step 3) is important for choosing an appropriate program.

Step 2 also involves clearly specifying the time line for expected change, and the ways in which change will be measured. Proactive explanation of the time line and measurement of change can be useful in selecting a program that fits your schools' or district's desired outcomes (e.g., selecting a program that would only reach desirable goals after multiple years of intervention would be insufficient for a school that needs immediate action). However, emerging evidence suggests how quickly SEL competencies may develop for different students in different programs, and some research suggests that some important changes can take place during a school year (CASEL, 2012).

Cleveland Example. Cleveland's needs were so great that the District chose to implement all 10 AIR recommendations. The recommendations were translated into four outcome areas: (1) Safe and Respectful Climate, (2) Challenge, (3) Student Support, and (4) SEL. Change in each of these areas was measured by teacher ratings of student social competence; attentiveness; aggression; measures of student attendance; behavior (reported as the average number of suspendable behavioral incidents per school), and removal from school (suspensions and expulsions). Tracking of these outcomes has been sustained in the district, and are now used for progress monitoring during the academic year, as well as for annual review and planning.

GTO Step 3: Which evidence-based models and best practices programs can be useful in reaching your district's goals and outcomes (BEST PRACTICES)? Once the need for SEL programming has been identified and prioritized by a district (Step1) and the target population, goals, and desired outcomes have been developed (Step 2), the next question in the GTO process is "What are the best practices for reaching each SEL-related objective?" If multiple objectives have been identified in Step 2, the question should be "What type of SEL program should be used for whom?" This step involves reviewing the empirical literature on effective evidence-based SEL programs and ensuring that the essential or core components of a proposed program are in place. The most thorough review of SEL programs is the *2013 CASEL Guide*. Another good source of program information is the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Intervention Reports organized under the Behavior Category, which includes many SEL programs (*http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc*).

Cleveland Example. The district, led by the Humanware Executive Team, examined the data and the AIR analyse,s and decided that all schools could benefit from SEL programming, starting with elementary schools. Given financial resource limits and the long-term return on investment of intervening with students who would be in the district for many years, Cleveland decided to start in the elementary schools. The district planners also decided that due to student and faculty mobility, it made sense to adopt a single SEL program rather than have multiple programs in multiple schools, so that there would be a common SEL language and common protocols. The selection process was collaborative and focused on evidence. The Humanware Executive Team convened a task force of school and community stakeholders, including teachers, families, and agency leaders to develop selection criteria, identify a short list of programs for consideration, then make a selection. AIR provided criteria for selecting evidence-based practices (Chapter 6 of *Safe, Supportive, and Successful Schools Step by Step*; Osher et al., 2004) and Cleveland consulted with AIR and CASEL and

utilized CASEL's earlier program review, *Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based SEL Programs*, (which has recently been updated by the *2013 CASEL Guide*), to develop a short list of programs to consider, including Second Step and PATHS.

GTO Step 4: What actions need to be taken so the selected program "fits" within your district (FIT)? In this GTO step, school districts are first expected to review the Step 3 program options in detail and select which program fits best within their school. It is likely that the review of evidence-based practices and practice-based evidence in Step 3 will result in a list of several viable SEL program options (as was the case in the Cleveland example). In Step 4, you determine which option is the *best fit* for your district or for particular schools (to select SEL programs, see CASEL, 2012). A common trap into which school districts fall is implementing programs because of their popularity or expected impact; yet systematically determining whether the program truly fits the setting is often overlooked and is essential. Just because a particular program has been effective elsewhere does not necessarily mean it will be equally successful in your setting.

Several resources exist for choosing a program that has the optimal fit with your setting. The *2013 CASEL Guide* describes a range of programs with slightly different features, and focuses on universal, teacher-taught programs. While all may focus on student SEL and skills that support academic achievement (i.e., the five core SEL competencies), the emphases may differ. Differences may be related to breadth or depth of learning, as well as the underlying pedagogies. Some may last a long time and be repeated annually as students progress through grade levels, while others may only be implemented for a year. SEL programs may also differ in how they integrate into the school: Some may be stand–alone programs, whereas others may be blended into broad curricula and implemented by classroom teachers.

Evidence-based programs may match the goals and characteristics of your setting extremely well but need some modifications of unessential elements to fit optimally. Making strategic adaptations to chosen programs wisely is an important part of Step 4 because some changes might dilute program effects and/or make the program harder to implement. For example, a chosen program may be intended to be taught 1 hour at a time over the course of 10 weeks, but given scheduling needs at your school, it would be preferable to teach the course for 30 minutes at a time over 20 weeks. There is much written on program adaptation (see Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Osher et al., 2004). We make two key recommendations here. First, districts should collaborate with program developers to ensure that program modifications do not exclude or dilute essential program components. Second, these adaptations should be monitored and documented regularly to ensure that the adaptation does not limit program effects.

The final component of GTO Step 4 stresses the importance of fit between the program mission and the broader values of the school context. The aim is to select a program that is both evidence based and culturally competent, both in terms of the cultures of the members of the school community and the culture of the school and district. Despite empirical evidence generated by researchers in highly controlled interventions, a given program may have reduced effects when implemented in different contexts. This may be partially related to a mismatch between the values and beliefs of the school (as well as the community within which the school is located) and the core components of the program. The salience of taking cultural context into consideration when selecting a program should not be underestimated. Assessing the fit increases buy-in to the program by ensuring that the program is aligned with the broader mission and values of the school.

Cleveland Example. To increase the likelihood that Cleveland's choice of an SEL program would fit within the district's context, the Humanware Executive Team factored in its own goals (e.g., impacts on academics, teacher support, and program success in a district like Cleveland) and conducted its own investigation. This investigation included identifying and speaking with personnel in other districts where the programs had been implemented successfully and interviewing practitioners in those communities. Once the list of possible

SEL programs to implement was reduced from six to two, the team invited the developers in for presentations, then selected PATHS based on its having been implemented successfully in similar contexts, its demonstrated impact on academics, their provision of external training (see Step 5, below), and the fact that it could be delivered as part on an integrated literacy instructional program (*www.channing-bete.com/paths*).

GTO Step 5: What organizational capacities are needed to implement the intervention (CAPACITY)? The focus of this step is the match between the capacities of your school to implement the requirements of a given program sufficiently. *Organizational capacity* refers to different types of resources an organization has to implement and sustain programs (see Wanless, Groark & Hatfield, Chapter 24, this volume). A mismatch between required program capacities and available school capacities could have a negative impact on program effects (Wandersman et al., 2000). Programs should be selected that match the existing capacities of the school or capacities that the school could realistically build prior to implementation. Districts and school personnel should also think about how to close the gap between needed capacities and existing ones. Organizational capacities are often categorized into five types: human, technical, fiscal, temporal, and physical.

1. *Human capacity.* Human capacity includes program staff (administrators and teachers) training, credentials, and experience. Building this type of capacity involves professional development and acquisition of the skills necessary to teach SEL effectively to a wide range of students. SEL programs that are more scripted (e.g., "manualized" and come with specific scope, sequence, instructions, and tools) may be an appropriate choice when teachers lack certain skills related to SEL interventions. On the other hand, if a set of teachers in a specific school or district have a high level of requisite skills for implementation, a less scripted program may be a better fit, allowing teachers to adapt materials more creatively to fit their students' needs and skills.

Cleveland Example. Cleveland personnel realized that neither their teachers, their principals, nor their supervisors had been trained in SEL, and they therefore lacked the necessary capacity to implement SEL programming on their own. They took this into account when selecting PATHS because its developer provided the level of external training and support that the Executive Team felt was necessary to support successful implementation. During its planning process and in consultation with the developer of PATHS, Cleveland personnel decided to also hire six PATHS coaches in order to increase teachers' capacity specifically to implement SEL programming.

2. *Technical capacity. Technical capacity* refers to the expertise needed to address all the aspects of program planning, implementation, and evaluation. At a school district level, capacity might include the knowledge and skills set of various implementation leaders and advocates to plan, implement, and evaluate an ongoing SEL program. Indeed, the ability to ask and to answer the 10 GTO questions themselves can be considered a form of technical capacity related to SEL initiatives.

Cleveland Example. Cleveland addressed issues of technical capacity by consulting with external organizations (AIR and CASEL) that provided coaching and support to the team responsible for overseeing the implementation of PATHS, as well as the other recommendations of the 2008 AIR Audit. This coaching helped senior leadership members who were directly responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of all components of the initiative: systemic, classroom-based SEL instruction and positive conditions for learning, coordinated mental health and health services, school–family–community partnerships, and links with effective after-school and community programming. However, the District later realized that it had failed to sufficiently train and support other key leaders, including the principals' supervisors and more senior leadership. This reinforced some separation of programming that existed in the District and caused the implementation of PATHS and related SEL programming to be considered a discrete program rather than a districtwide strategy. The District has subsequently broadened its training and support by accessing the

support of AIR, CASEL, and the member districts of the Collaborating Districts Initiative.

3. *Fiscal capacity. Fiscal capacity* reflects the need to secure adequate funding to implement the program as planned, including securing appropriate staffing and materials to conduct programming effectively. Programs that are integrated into ongoing curricula may be more easily accommodated, while those requiring additional equipment, workbooks, and other print and/or electronic materials and specialized staff require more fiscal capacity.

Cleveland Example. Although the Executive Team had committed to hiring six PATHS coaches in order to ensure teachers' capacity to provide the PATHS curriculum, a sizable district budget deficit and unanticipated loss of grant income forced a midcourse change. Hiring of the coaches was delayed during the first year of implementation, and no coaches were hired the second year. This affected the breadth of teacher commitment and the breadth and quality of implementation (Kendziora & Osher, 2009). The Cleveland Teachers Union and the external consultants from AIR, PATHS, and CASEL worked together to develop a more cost-efficient approach to monitoring implementation and providing teacher support that did not depend on external coaches.

4. *Temporal capacity. Temporal capacity* involves providing enough time for an intervention to be implemented effectively. A common complaint from teachers is that they cannot possibly squeeze one more thing into their school day. Determining how the delivery of SEL programming can be integrated into the current school day and how adequate professional development and training to teachers will be provided is an important, yet often overlooked, aspect of program planning and implementation.

Cleveland Example. The 2008 AIR Audit recommendations were ambitious in terms of time and resources. Hence, implementation was phased in over 5 years, with infrastructure-building and evidenced-based SEL programs being identified in Year 1, implemented in Year 2, with SEL standards developed in Years 3–4. This timing was developed to moderate the burden of implementing too many things at once, as well as to build on the development of District capacity and commitment as the District trained staff, learned from experience, and used data to identify strengths, challenges, and continued needs.

5. *Physical capacity. Physical capacity* refers to the actual physical space needed for implementation. In overcrowded schools, the ability to set aside classroom or other gathering spaces necessary for SEL programming may prove challenging. However, integrating SEL work into the existing curriculum and therefore into the existing schedule and physical spaces can ameliorate this challenge.

Cleveland Example. In Cleveland, no extra space was required for the PATHS program per se. However, PATHS was an anchoring program for a broad set of school climate and culture interventions. A closely related program was the shift away from traditional inschool suspension rooms to the Planning Centers, which did require additional classroom space. The Planning Centers, which employed SEL strategies, were to be safe harbors instead of punitive inschool suspension settings for students. The Planning Centers allowed students to cool down, stop and think about alternative ways of handling problems, receive support from staff, utilize a computer based SEL program (Ripple Effects), and do their schoolwork.

GTO Step 6: What is the plan for implementing the selected program (PLAN)? The focus of Step 6 is on creating an implementation plan. Creating a specific and realistic plan for implementation increases the chances that the program will be implemented as intended and desired outcomes achieved. Quality plans involve creating a time line of anticipated program implementation tasks and activities. This increases the probability that program rollout proceeds in a sequenced and timely manner. A plan may have some additional helpful components, such as the following:

- What activities should be completed for successful program implementation?
- In what order should these activities be completed?

- Who is responsible for ensuring that each task is completed?
- When should each task be completed?
- How will we determine that the tasks are being completed with quality?

Cleveland Example. One of the key features of the Cleveland plan for the PATHS implementation (as well as implementation of the SEL Standards and the Planning Centers) was a detailed work plan that included provision of teacher time for training. The Humanware Executive Team met monthly to review progress on the work plan and used this data for continuous quality improvement. As the Executive Team reviewed the work plan, it quickly became evident that the plan failed to outline implementation plans and time lines in sufficient detail. Therefore, the Executive Team conducted a full-day workshop with the PATHS developers and technical assistance consultants to develop a second, more detailed implementation plan early in the first implementation year. This new, more detailed time line would enable the Executive Team to track early implementation efforts closely and provide personalized supports to schools in a more timely manner.

GTO Step 7: How will the quality of program implementation be monitored and assessed (IMPLEMENTATION AND PROCESS EVALUATION)? Step 7 is about implementation of the plan and process evaluation. It aims to ensure *quality* implementation (Meyers, Durlak, & Wandersman, 2012; Meyers, Katz, et al., 2012) of your chosen SEL program through careful monitoring of the plan that was developed in Step 6. Monitoring helps to ensure that programs are being implemented as planned and also identifies any areas in which midcourse corrections may be needed. Many evidence-based SEL programs that a school or district might wish to use also provide tools for monitoring teacher performance (CASEL, 2013). Even if you choose a different program, a review of these tools is an excellent starting place for determining how you will monitor SEL because the best ones encompass the questions posed earlier. O*ngoing monitoring* of implementation provides "real-time" feedback on progress toward goals and promotes quality of services, which in turn increases the probability of better outcomes and eventual impact for students.

Cleveland Example. Cleveland's Humanware Executive Team discovered that it is important to develop a plan that not only operationalizes all details but also monitors its execution. This monitoring includes monthly reviews of implementation data, and eliciting and acting on feedback from the PATHS consultants, teacher union representatives, and school principals. Monitoring has included both outputs (e.g., the number of teachers trained in PATHS) and measures (e.g., walkthrough observations of PATHS implementation). Here again, Cleveland's monitoring strategy took shape and improved over time as initial monitoring measures insufficiently or inaccurately captured implementation progress and additional and replacement measures were identified.

GTO Step 8: How well did the program work (OUTCOMES)? Step 8 addresses outcome evaluation and is the focus of traditional summative evaluation approaches. It answers the fundamental outcome evaluation question, "Did we reach our desired outcomes?" As previously noted, planning for the outcome evaluation in Step 8 of GTO starts early in the process (Step 2), when desired outcomes for programs are identified. The progression through the previous GTO steps is the core of the GTO logic: By effectively taking into consideration Steps 1–7, schools increase the likelihood of reaching desired outcomes and literally *getting to the outcomes* the District or school seeks. If the desired outcomes have been strategically written in Step 2 (what should change, by how much, for whom, and by when), then Step 8 is a relatively straightforward process of utilizing data to determine how much the target population changed during a specified time period. The *2013 CASEL Guide* provides some key outcomes associated with best-practice SEL programming (positive social behavior, fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress, and more academic success) that would likely fit the goals of your district established in Step 2.

Measuring change on each student domain, as well as additional domains that your district may choose to measure, will be best served by collecting data from multiple sources. School records are a good place to

start because they provide data primarily on conduct problems and academic success. Student, teacher, and parent survey reports may be good ways to collect data on positive social behaviors and emotional distress. Many evidence-based SEL programs also provide tools for measuring student behavior (CASEL, 2012). A review of these tools as a starting place for completing Step 8 is recommended.

Cleveland Example. The PATHS program utilized in Cleveland has been evaluated in randomized controlled trials in grades PreK–5, and students have been followed for up to 3 years. Key outcomes have included improved academic performance, increased positive social behavior, and reduced conduct problems and emotional distress. The AIR evaluation found significant improvements for social competence and attention. However, PATHS did not have the impact on aggression that would otherwise have been anticipated by the empirical evidence of the PATHS program effects (Faria, Kendziora, Brown, & Osher, 2012; Osher, Poirer, Jarjoura, & Brown, 2013).

GTO Step 9: How will continuous quality improvement (CQI) strategies be incorporated? Step 9 links program evaluation to program improvement by ensuring that users assess available data received throughout the previous steps to plan and then implement program modifications. Often, schools and districts receive data about the previous school year's activities and outcomes during the summer months. This is an excellent time to review findings and engage in strategic CQI (Step 9). For example, a District at the end of the first year of an SEL intervention has received and carefully reviewed process data (Step 7) and outcome data (Step 8), and can utilize that data to make modifications by retracing steps Steps 1 through 6.

Cleveland Example. As evidenced in many of the earlier examples, the CQI process has been applied in Cleveland for 5 years. It has enabled the District to make many midcourse corrections, such as revising and clarifying the District's SEL goals and outcomes, redesigning the PATHS implementation when financial challenges emerged, reshaping technical support to provide increased coaching and capacity building for senior leaders, broadening SEL training to all senior leaders to better ensure institutional buy-in, and creating PATHS training videos and developing "train the trainers" to replace ongoing consultancy training.

In addition to using the CQI process of Step 9 to assess success of SEL program implementation, the logic inherent in this step can also be used to interpret outcomes. In the Cleveland example, the Humanware Executive Team and its school-based collaborators anticipated that student aggression would reduce as a result of PATHS implementation. However, the outcome evaluation did not show this change. This finding provides an opportunity to reapply GTO thinking. That is, it is appropriate to "back up" through the previous GTO questions and ask whether the failure to demonstrate expected decreases in student aggression could be answered by one of the preceding GTO steps.

1. *Step 1: Needs and Resources*. Was a specific need to reduce student aggression identified? Was enough specificity about the type of aggression (physical, emotional) or location of aggression (e.g., middle school boys) gathered?
2. *Step 2: Goals and Objectives*. What were the specific goals stated by the Humanware Executive Team related to student aggression? How much was student aggression targeted to change? Among which students? By when? Could the changes anticipated in the goals and objectives step have been overly ambitious?
3. *Step 3: Best Practices*. The Humanware Executive Team chose the PATHS curriculum for a number of good reasons (see Step 3), and indeed PATHS achieved most of the identified goals (see Step 8). Was student aggression a core component of PATHS? Is it possible that another SEL program with demonstrated effectiveness on student aggression could have been incorporated into the universal SEL programming?
4. *Step 4: Fit*. Was there already a program going on that could have caused a misfit with the PATHs components that were specifically targeted toward student aggression?

5. *Step 5: Capacities*. Changes in funding may have compromised teacher preparation and support for programming. Could this change in capacity help explain this outcome?
6. *Step 6: Plan*. When a more detailed plan for implementing PATHS was developed with the Executive Team, was the plan for implementing the core components of student aggression sufficiently addressed?
7. *Step 7: Implementation and Process Evaluation*. Were the components of PATHS that focus on student aggression implemented with quality? Were the process measures that monitored this implementation sufficient for measuring quality?

GTO Step 10: If the program is successful, how will it be sustained (SUSTAIN)? The final step of GTO relates to program sustainability. Sustainability is often equated with acquiring ongoing, consistent funding for programs, yet there are multiple elements that contribute to sustained program effectiveness over time. Sustainability is ultimately about the ability of a district to embed SEL programs into its ongoing, routine delivery of services so that it is not contingent on fluctuating allocation of resources. Sometimes referred to as *routinization* or *institutionalization*, this way of thinking about sustainability centers around the idea that new and demonstrably effective programs should become so integrated into the district or school that that delivery components of the program become "business as usual."

Cleveland Example. Sustainability of PATHS and all SEL programming in Cleveland has several key components. First, it has won District support for funding because it demonstrated effectiveness; that is, PATHS improved the conditions for learning for students in Cleveland just as it had proven to do so in previous effectiveness trials. Second, the District has implemented PATHS as part of a larger, more holistic SEL program; Cleveland has a districtwide SEL programming investment of which PATHS is an essential part. Third, PATHS and other SEL programs have been embedded into the District's Family and Community Engagement activities, so that parents, families, and community partners are increasingly using the same SEL strategies that the District uses and therefore rely on the continued District support of the strategy. Fourth, and finally, the District has included SEL in its strategic plan and district-level strategy measures. As a result of carefully using a process similar to GTO, Cleveland has successfully attracted the attention of national technical assistance networks (CASEL, Collaborating District Initiative, AIR, etc.) and both local and national funding networks (Cleveland Foundation, George Gund Foundation, Mt. Sinai Healthcare Foundation, the Abington Foundation, and the NoVo Foundation), which collectively assist the District both in sustaining and improving their SEL investments.

Summary

SEL is important for improving both school and community outcomes. Doing so requires more than identifying an evidenced based SEL program (or programs); it requires selecting the right evidence-based program(s) and implementing the program(s) in the right way(s). This involves finding programs and strategies that address local needs, align with the culture and capacity of the school and its staff, and have been demonstrated to achieve outcomes with similar students, staff, and schools in similar contexts. Moreover, once the right program is chosen, plans must be developed, implemented, and monitored to ensure that staff embrace and are able to implement the new program. This effective rollout depends on providing staff with the training and support to implement the new technologies, monitoring implementation and evaluating results, and using monitoring and evaluation data for continuous quality improvement. In this chapter, we have introduced the GTO approach, which is designed to address each of these needs.

A GTO approach to SEL implementation addresses the challenges that school systems face in an era of diminishing resources and increasing need to demonstrate accountability. While we have provided a SEL-specific example of how a district in Cleveland used GTO thinking in implementing the PATHS program, the GTO framework can be broadly applied to other areas (e.g., STEM, Common Core) across multiple set-

tings. The GTO system demystifies accountability by laying out steps that are strategic and sequential, allowing districts to systematically document the need for programming, the quality with which programs are implemented, and their ultimate impact on students.

Note

1. Getting To Outcomes and GTO are registered trademarks of the University of South Carolina and the RAND Corporation.

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