INTRODUCTION

Design for Social and Emotional Learning Standards

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children develop awareness and management of their emotions, set and achieve important personal and academic goals, use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships, and demonstrate decision making and responsible behaviors to achieve school and life success. There is a strong research base indicating that these SEL competencies improve students' social/emotional development, readiness to learn, classroom behavior, and academic performance.

The SEL goals, standards, and benchmarks were initially developed by a broadly representative group of teachers, school administrators, student support staff, human services professionals, and parents with expertise in child development and learning, curriculum design, and instruction. After the standards were written, public comment and feedback provided the writing team with information used in revising the standards before adoption by the ISBE.

Criteria for SEL Standards

The standards and benchmarks were expected to meet the following criteria:
- Be clear and meaningful to educators, students, parents and the community
- Include an appropriate combination of knowledge and skills
- Be specific enough to convey what students should learn, but broad enough to allow for a variety of approaches to teaching and aligning curriculum
- Be specific enough to allow for classroom assessments to measure student progress

The SEL Standards Framework

Goals: The three SEL goals are broad statements that organize the knowledge and skills that comprise SEL content. Each goal has an explanation of why it is important.

Learning Standards: The ten SEL learning standards are specific statements of the knowledge and skills within a goal that students should know and be able to do. Taken together, the standards define the learning needed to achieve the goals, but each is general enough to apply to learning across the entire range of grade-level clusters. Standards are broader learning targets used to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Benchmarks: The benchmarks are learning targets that are more specific than standards. They specify developmentally appropriate SEL knowledge and skills for each standard at one of five grade-level clusters: early elementary (grades K-3), late elementary (grades 4-5), middle/junior high (grades 6-8), early high school (grades 9-
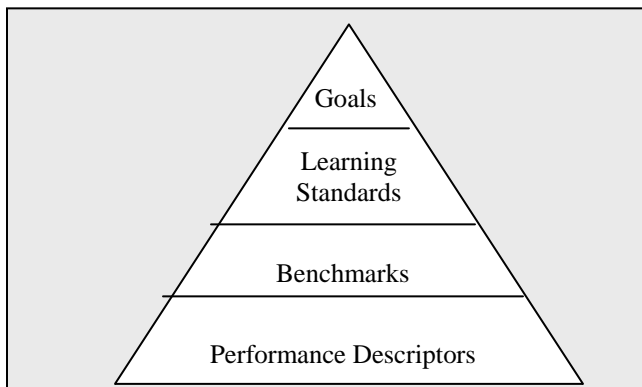
10), and late high school (grades 11-12). The benchmarks are not designed to be all-inclusive; instead they highlight important, representative features of each standard that instruction should emphasize at each grade-cluster. Benchmarks increase in developmental sophistication and become more rigorous from one grade-level cluster to the next. In addition, the SEL benchmarks lend themselves to being taught in integrated ways across the 10 standards within each grade-level cluster.

Performance Descriptors: The performance descriptors are the most specific learning targets that build upon the standards and benchmarks. They will be designed to help educators select and design curricula, classroom activities and instruction, and performance-based and other assessments aligned with the standards. Descriptors are also helpful in mapping curriculum or validating what a school or district has already developed and implemented. Performance descriptors offer a representative, rather than exhaustive, list of learning targets that provide greater detail of the specific SEL knowledge, reasoning, and skills highlighted in the standards.

Many of the SEL Standards can be correlated with the Illinois Learning Standards. There are many obvious connections especially in the learning areas of Health and Social Science. However, it is possible to integrate the SEL standards throughout all learning areas. Classroom activities can be designed to align with both the SEL knowledge and skills and knowledge and skills in other learning areas of the Illinois Learning Standards.