

Aims

- To explore current mental health and wellbeing policies and programs for primary-aged students
- To examine primary teachers' perceptions of school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) practices in relation to wellbeing policies and programs

Background

- Mental health disorders of 1 in 7 school-aged children (Lawrence et al., 2015) exacerbated by pandemic (Price et al., 2022)
- SEL programs have shown to have a positive effect on SEL competencies, academic performance, social behaviour, conduct problems, and emotional distress (e.g., Durlak et al., 2011)
- Teachers often required to implement mental health and wellbeing programs without experience or implementation training (Brackett et al., 2012)
- Social and emotional wellbeing measures have identified differences characterised by external (school, home and community), internal (social, emotional learning skills), feelings, and behaviours (Bernard & Stephanou, 2018)

Policy Example

- Education settings are a key focus area of the National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (National Mental Health Commission, 2021)

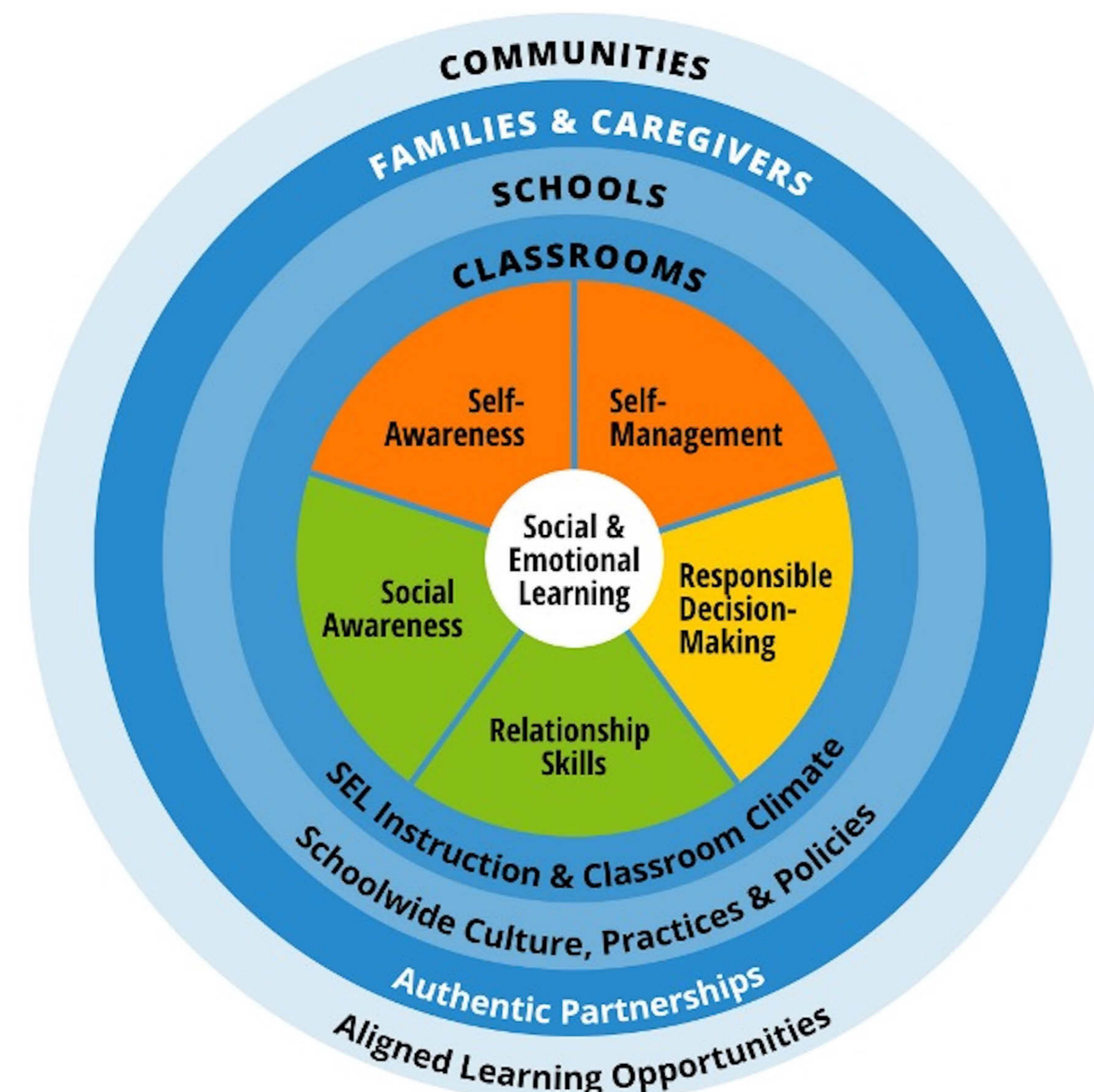
Program Example

- The Smiling Mind School Program – a mindfulness based SEL program aligned with the PDHPE syllabus - is being implemented into 400 NSW schools (Smiling Mind, 2023)

Research Questions

- What aspects of mental health and wellbeing policies are reflected in the school-based social and emotional learning programs?
- To what extent do mental health and wellbeing policies and school-based programs shape how primary teachers promote students' social and emotional learning and development?

CASEL Framework



Retrieved from <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework>

Proposed Methods

Qualitative multiple-case research design

- Preliminary policy analysis
- Minimum 4 cases (primary schools in NSW)

Data sources

- School-based program documentation
- Interviews with teachers and wellbeing coordinators
- School-wide student surveys

Preliminary Findings

Education settings are key for children's mental health and wellbeing with SEL development recommended as a national priority (Productivity Commission, 2020)

Various SEL education programs have been developed, yet often lack consistent, standardised formats. Core components of evidence-based SEL programs are being explored (e.g., Lawson et al., 2018)

Intended Outcomes

This research will help promote the use of evidence-informed preventative opportunities in student mental health for schools.

References

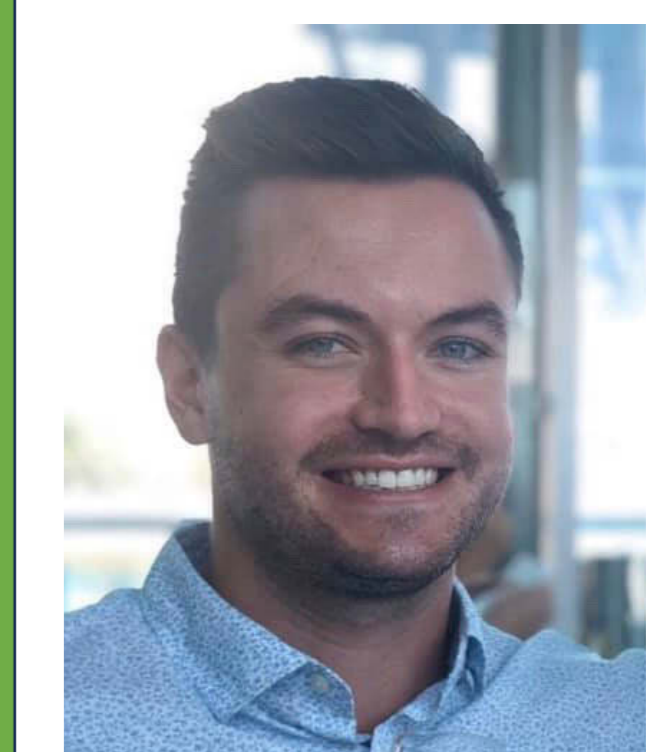
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