



*Welcome to*



# Measuring Soft Skills Doesn't Need to Be Hard

A Q&A with Hunter Gehlbach  
on SEL Measurement





# Poll Question:



Where are you in the SEL measurement process?

- a. SEL? What's SEL?
- b. Early – just starting to consider it
- c. Midway – have a measure selected and are planning to start collecting data soon
- d. Late – the SEL data are already rolling in





# Poll Question:



Why are you considering collecting SEL data?

- a. To learn where the kids I work with are struggling in terms of their SEL
- b. To learn if the kids I work with have grown in terms of their SEL
- c. To compare the SEL skills of students in the schools/programs I work with
- d. Other – please describe in the chat





# Agenda



Welcome and introductions

*Measuring Social and Emotional Learning: A Brief Guide*

Using SEL measures for formative purposes

Audience Q & A

Close

# Today's Speakers



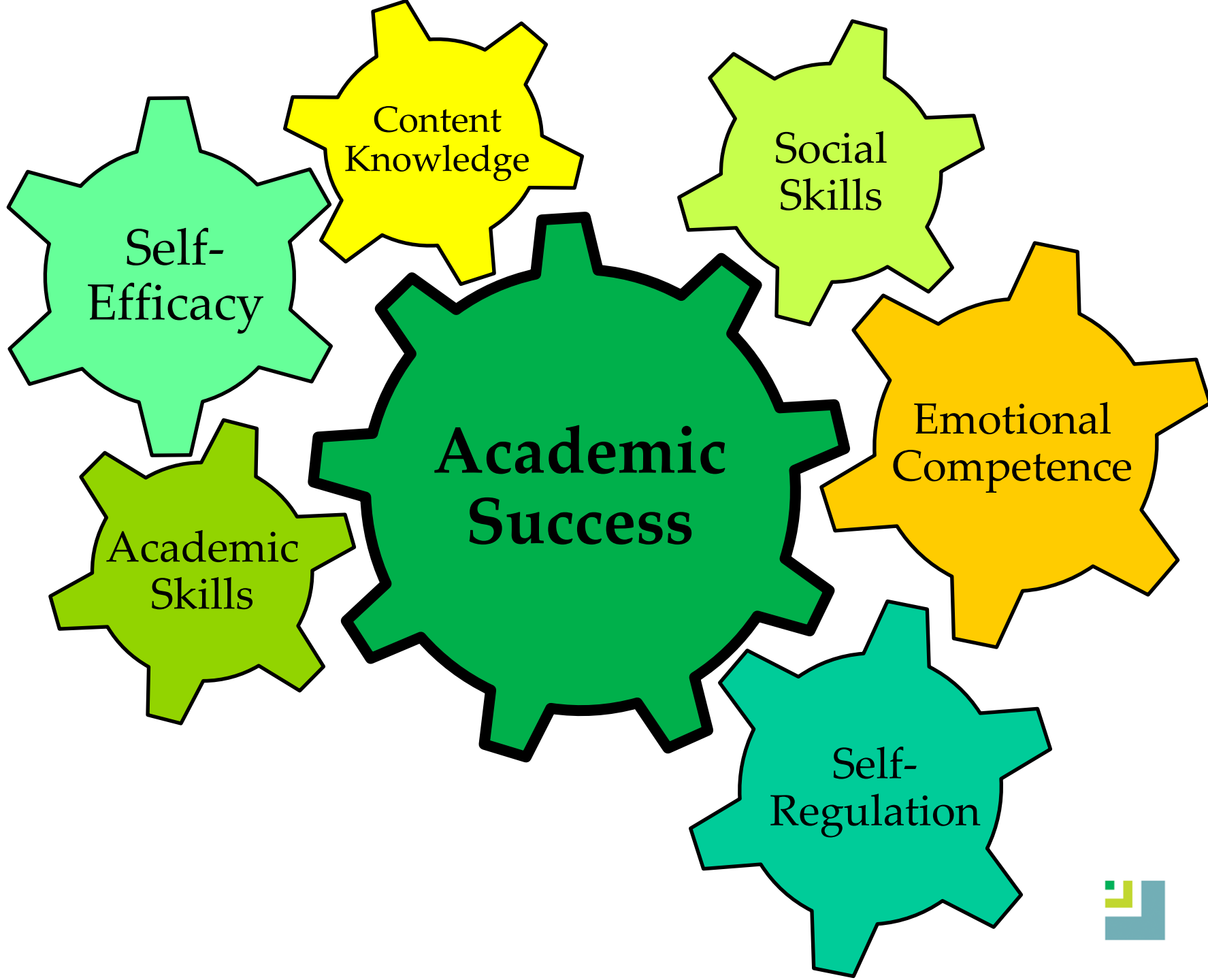
Karyn Lewis  
Education  
Northwest



Hunter Gehlbach  
Panorama  
Education













# Terminology for the “Other Stuff”

What to call the “other stuff”?

- Social-emotional learning (SEL)
- Non-cognitive or non-academic skills
- 21st century skills
- Mindsets, essential skills, and habits (MESH)





# Terminology for the “Other Stuff”

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# Why the Confusion?

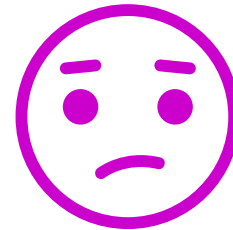
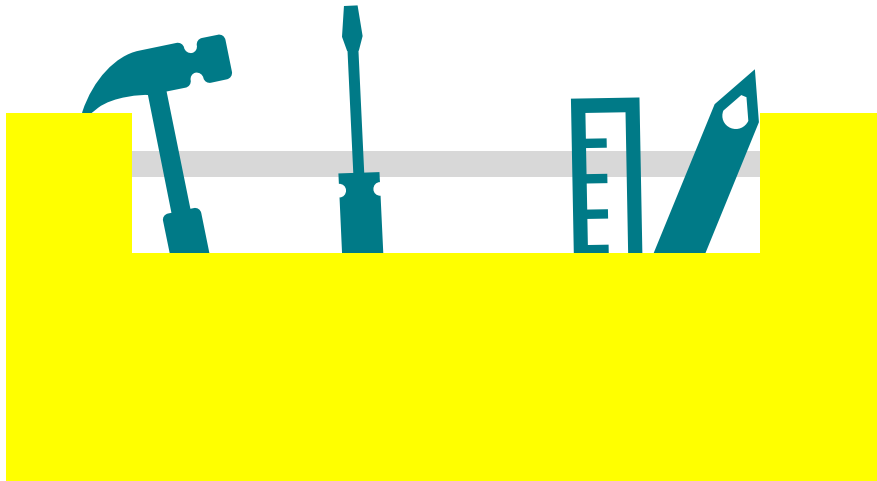
“It is a very diverse group of factors and the reason it’s been hard to come up with a name is that **they don’t necessarily belong together.**”

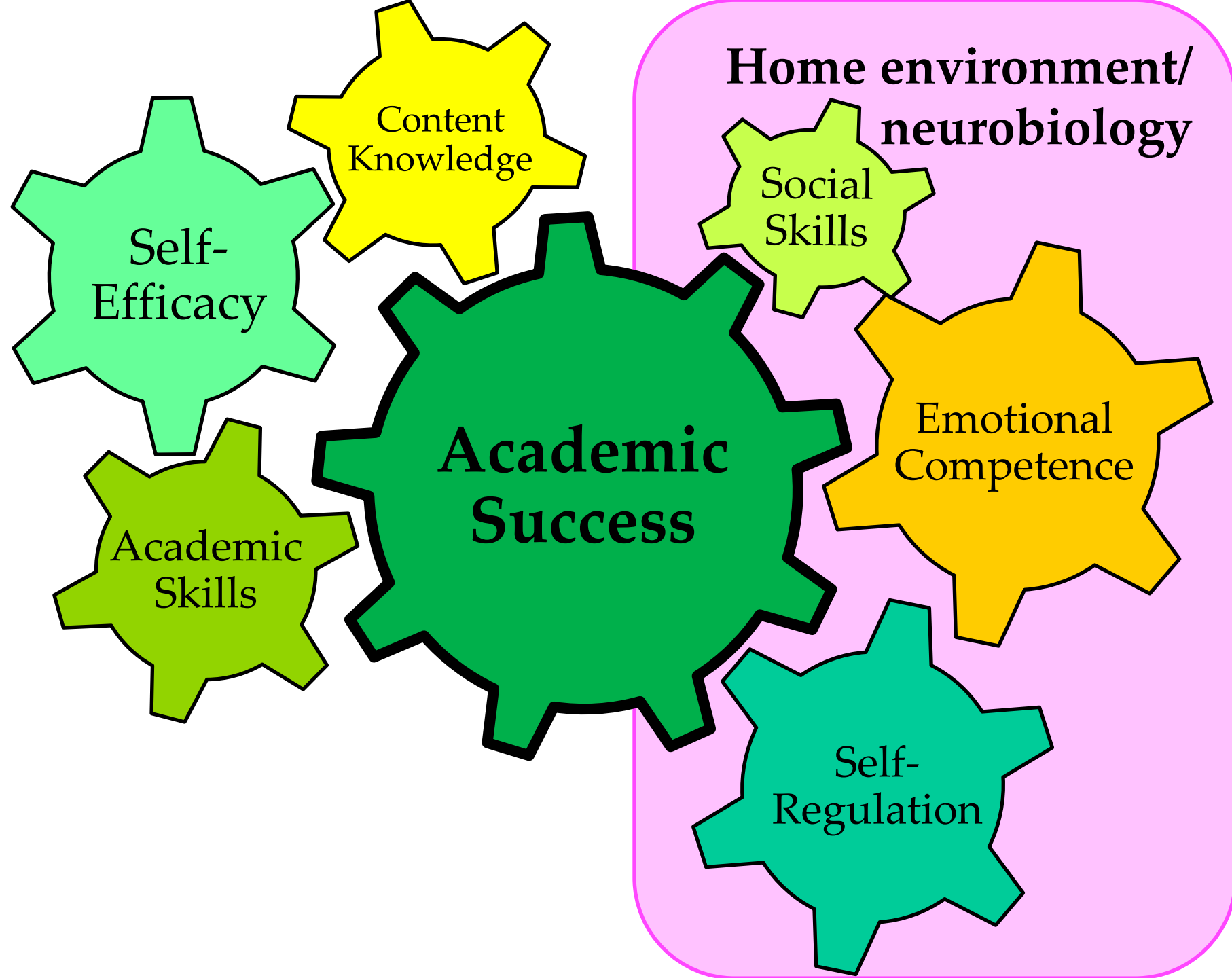
Dr. Carol Dweck





# Toolkit for School Success







**Home environment/  
neurobiology**

**Content  
Knowledge**

**Social  
Skills**

**Emotional  
Competence**

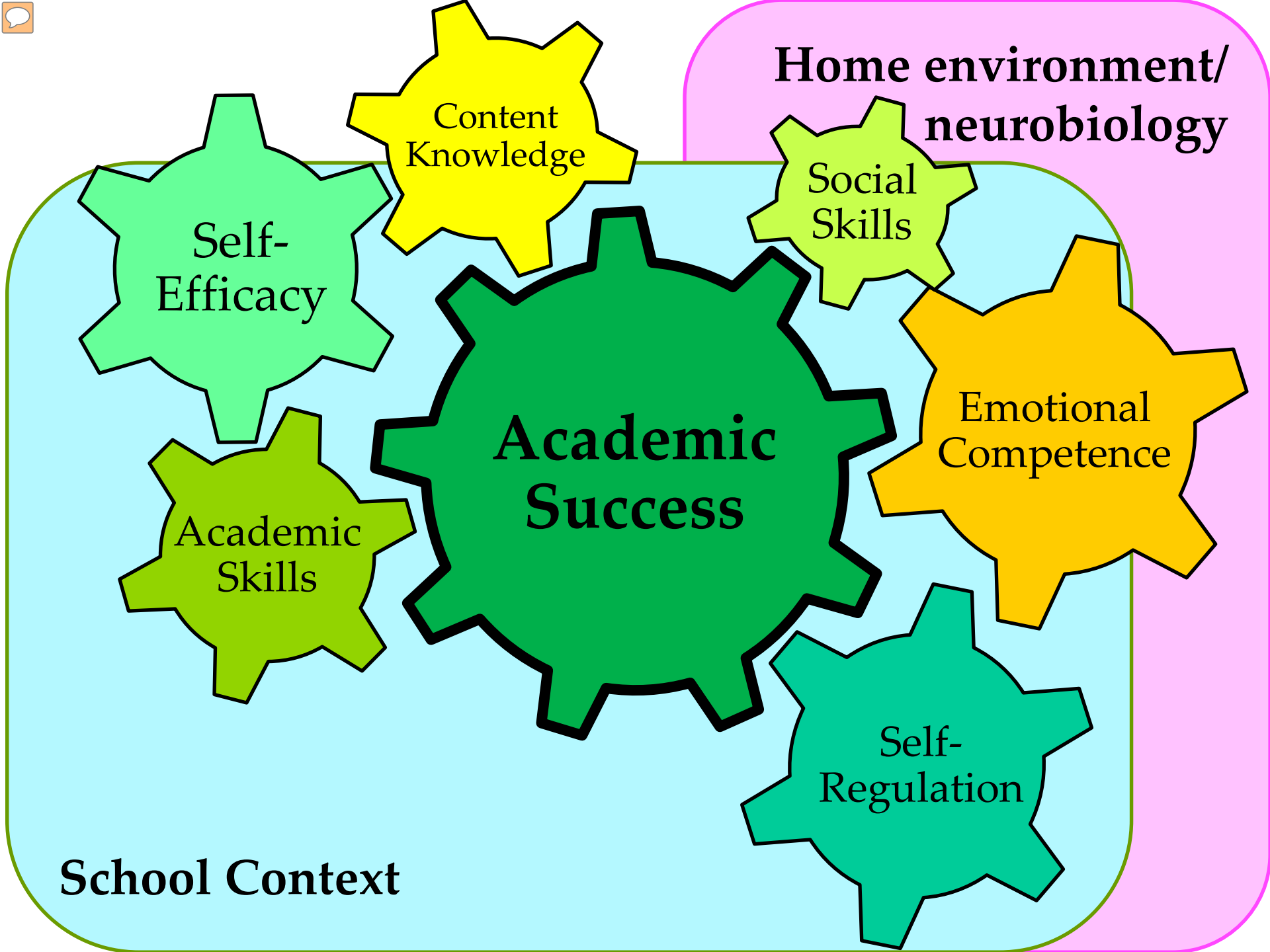
**Self-  
Regulation**

**Academic  
Success**

**Self-  
Efficacy**

**Academic  
Skills**

**School Context**



# Implications for Measurement

- The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires schools to track at least one “non-academic” measure of school quality or student success
- Opened up unprecedented opportunity for schools to consider success more broadly, and many schools proposed using SEL as a potential indicator





# Implications for Measurement

[nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com)

## Testing for Joy and Grit? School Nationwide Push to Measure Emotional Skills

Kate Zernike



Jade Cooney with her fifth-grade class at Visi-

[washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com)

## Now some schools are testing kids for their 'grit' and 'joy' levels. Really.

By Valerie Strauss



# Summary of Controversy

- There's no standard benchmark of healthy SEL development and therefore no appropriate way to “grade” kids or schools
- Might be possible to “game” the surveys
- An annual assessment isn't likely to give you actionable data for interventions



# What to Make of the Controversy?

- SEL measures, like all measures, are flawed

“All measures suck, and they each suck in their own way.”

Angela Duckworth





# And Yet ...

SEL is important, and *formative* information about students who are struggling can be useful for schools



# SEL Measurement Guide

- Distill key decisions for implementing SEL measurement projects
- Promote the collection of high-quality SEL data that are robust and actionable

education northwest

## Measuring Social and Emotional Learning (SEL): A Brief Guide

Karin Lewis, Education Northwest

1 Clarify the purpose for measuring 2 Decide which SEL constructs to measure 3 Select the appropriate SEL measurement tool

### STEP 1: CLARIFY THE PURPOSE FOR MEASURING

MEASUREMENT PURPOSE	DESCRIPTION	CONSIDERATIONS
Identifying student need	Determining the specific needs of students who would likely benefit from extra support (front-end approach—intervene early before problems arise)	SEL measures can provide valid and reliable information about participants in aggregate but may not be sufficiently reliable for individual diagnosis.
Early warning systems	Identifying students at risk for negative outcomes and in need of additional support (back-end approach—intervene once problems have been detected)	Requires SEL measures that have been validated specifically for this purpose. Currently, few (if any) have been.
Program improvement	Determining program improvement priorities based on students' current status (front-end approach—where should we focus our efforts)	Is the burden of a survey outweighed by its potential benefits? In some cases existing data (e.g., chronic absenteeism rates, climate surveys) can serve as a proxy.
Priority setting	Determining whether program improvement efforts were successful (back-end approach—were our efforts effective?)	When used to assess whether improvement efforts were successful, SEL measures must be focused on constructs that are specifically tied to improvement efforts and sensitive to short-term changes.
Accountability	Identifying schools, districts, or programs in need of additional support	When used to compare settings/programs, SEL measures must be reliable at the setting level (i.e., not show evidence of rater bias); when tied to high-stakes decisions, there is the potential for "gaming" the measures.

### STEP 2: DECIDE WHICH SEL CONSTRUCTS TO MEASURE

#### CONSIDERATIONS

Does it matter? Measure constructs that have the potential to impact long-term outcomes.

What do we care about? Measure constructs that align with local priorities and goals.

What is within our power to change? Measure constructs that are actually malleable.

What are we equipped to change? Measure constructs that are aligned with existing capacities (i.e., structures/resources are currently in place to support students and/or inform instruction and programming).

### STEP 3: SELECT THE APPROPRIATE SEL MEASUREMENT TOOL

#### CONSIDERATIONS

Should we survey students or adults? Ask the right questions of the right people. Students may be the best judge of their own internal beliefs and mindsets (e.g., sense of belonging, beliefs about effort and growth mindset), but the adults that work with them might be a better judge of their outward behavior (e.g., conscientiousness, social skills).

Does the tool provide actionable data? Measurement tools must give practitioners the accurate and timely information they need to take explicit action.

Is this tool rigorous enough? The required level of rigor is determined by the intended use of the data. For example, data used for high-stakes decision-making require higher rigor than data used for internal information gathering. Rigor is defined as the extent to which a measure is established as reliable and valid for the intended setting.

Is the tool practical? How much does the tool cost? Will additional training be required to administer the survey and/or analyze the data? How quickly can the data be accessed? Will additional technology be required to administer the tool? How burdensome will it be for respondents?

#### Resources

American Institutes for Research, SEL Solutions. (2013). *Are you ready to assess social and emotional development?* Retrieved from <http://www.aie.org/resources/are-you-ready-to-assess-social-and-emotional-development>

Bryll, D., & Wang, K. (2016). *Assessing social and emotional skills in out-of-school time settings: Considerations for practitioners (Issue brief)*. Retrieved from <https://www.anscenter.org/andc/youthresearch/publications/issue-brief-assessing-sel-in-out-of-school-time-settings.pdf>

Melnick, H., Cook-Harvey, C. M., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Encouraging social and emotional learning in the center of new accountability*. Retrieved from Learning Policy Institute website: <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/encouraging-social-emotional-learning-new-accountability-report>

Yeppe, D., Byr, A., Malsick, J., Haxman, H., & Morales, L. (2012). *Rigorous measurement*. Retrieved from Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching website: <https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/resources/publications/practical-measurement/>



# SEL Measurement Guide

1. Clarify the purpose for measuring



# SEL Measurement Guide

1. Clarify the purpose for measuring
2. Decide which constructs to measure





# SEL Measurement Guide

1. Clarify the purpose for measuring
2. Decide which constructs to measure
3. Select the appropriate tool







Hunter Gehlbach  
Director of Research  
Associate Professor, UCSB

# Questions for Dr. Gehlbach



How do you define SEL? What advice can you give for selecting SEL capacities to measure?



What do you think about the possibility of measuring SEL? What are the goals of the measurement process?



When is it best to survey students?

When is it best to survey teachers  
and other adults?



How do SEL measures relate to climate surveys? What can you learn from one type of data that you can't from the other?



What keeps you up at night when it comes to SEL measurement?



Do you have a favorite SEL  
measurement success story?



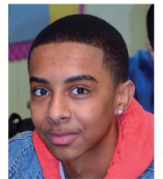
What are the most pressing future challenges for the field of SEL measurement to tackle?







# Audience Q & A



# Want to Learn More?

[Are you ready to assess social and emotional development?](#)

*American Institutes for Research*

[Assessing social & emotional skills in out-of-school time settings: Considerations for practitioners](#)

Blyth, D., & Flaten, K. (2016).

*University of Minnesota Extension*

[Encouraging social and emotional learning in the context of new accountability](#)

Melnick, H., Cook-Harvey, C. M., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017).

*Learning Policy Institute*

[Practical measurement](#)

Yeager, D., Bryk, A., Muhich, J., Hausman, H., & Morales, L. (2013).

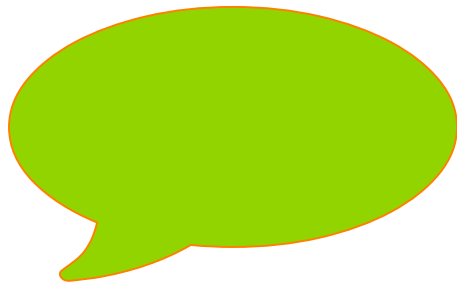
*Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*

[Measurement guide](#)

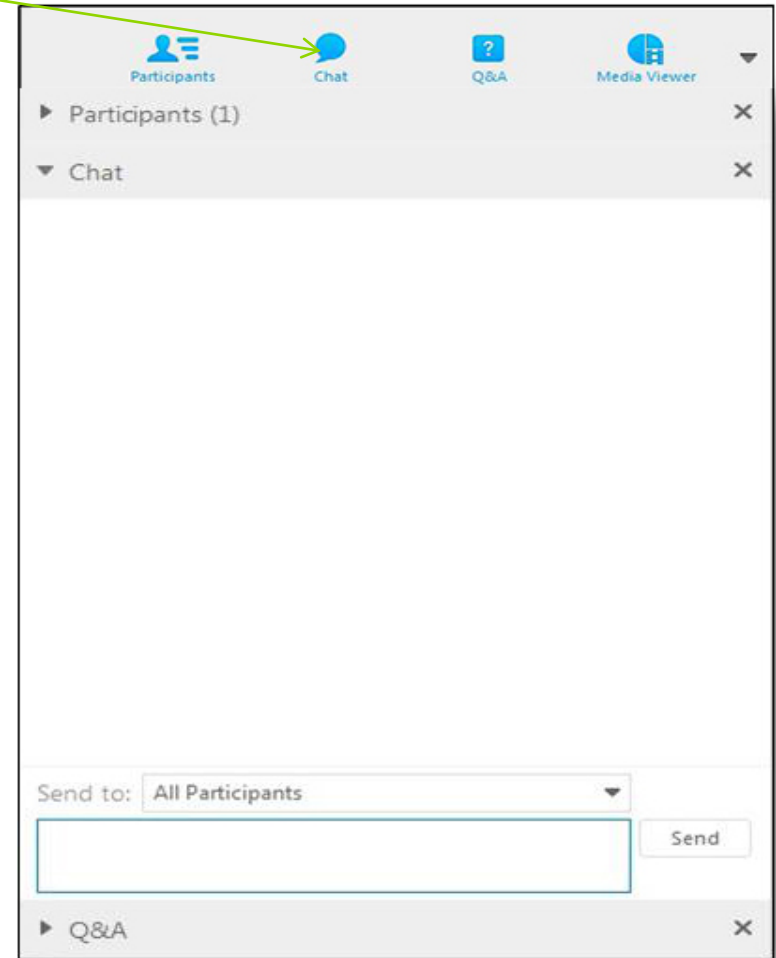
*Coming soon from CASEL's work group on SEL measurement*



# Let's Chat:



How are you seeing SEL surveys being used in the field?



# Thanks for Coming - Stay in Touch!



Karyn Lewis

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