Assessing Through the Lens of Social and Emotional Learning
Cynthia dedicates this work to all who have inspired her to pursue academic knowledge (dissertation committee members) and to the many colleagues who love making assessment work. She would also like to thank her mother and father who have instilled in her a SEL mindset and a “can do” attitude and her partner for always being her biggest cheerleader!

Dee (Darla) L. Fabry
Assessing Through the Lens of Social and Emotional Learning
Tools and Strategies

Cynthia Sistek
Dee L. Fabry
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[to come]

—Nicholas Yoder
About the Authors

Cynthia Sistek, EdD, (Dr. C) is a Professor in the Sanford College of Education for National University in San Diego, CA. Currently, she serves as the Academic Program Director for the Master of Arts in Social and Emotional Learning. In 2020, Cynthia co-developed MA SEL. In addition, Dr. Sistek-Chandler designed and edited the 10 Playbooks in Social Emotional Learning (https://selplaybook.org). For the 2022-2023 year, she served as the Chair of the SEL Special Interest Group for the American Education Research Association.

Cynthia is also a recognized leader in Educational Technology who in 2020, was awarded EdTech Digest’s Higher Education Technology Leader of the Year. In 2019 she earned the prestigious ISTE and CUE Award for “Making IT Happen” as well as earning a Gold and Platinum Disk from (CUE) for her lifetime achievements and service to the educational technology community.

Cynthia is a pioneer in the area of online learning where she has designed and taught online courses since 1999. Her ongoing research focuses on the efficacy of online learning in higher education, the intersections of SEL in online environments, and how synchronous methods of online communication enhance teaching and learning. Her book, Exploring Online Learning Through Synchronous and Asynchronous Methods, was published in April 2020 and showcased many studies and practices that support online learning.

Dee L. Fabry, PhD, is professor emeritus, National University, Sanford College of Education, La Jolla, CA. She serves as adjunct faculty for the MA Social Emotional Learning teaching graduate level research courses and assessing for learning to impact both teaching and learning.

Dee served National University as the Associate Provost, University Academic Assessment Committee chair, Sanford College of Education Coordinator of Assessment Services, Department Chair, Teacher Education, and Program Lead for the Master of Science in Advanced Teaching Practices.

As Vice President, she led the test development department at Plato Learning and was the project manager for Kaplan Learning
in creating criterion-referenced tests. Dee was appointed to the National Assessment in Education Task Force where she contributed regularly to the blogs on effective formative assessment.

Her most recent publication is *Clarifying Learning Targets in Assessment Education: Bridging Research, Theory, and Practice to Promote Equity and Student Learning* (with M. L. Peterson, 2020).

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Introduction

The authors of this book are both educators and researchers in a large college of education at a private, non-profit institution. Our book’s focus stems from our work as and with practitioners. What are we seeing? Wrong question. What are we NOT seeing? We are not seeing content that aligns to the needs of classroom teachers and their students. We see SEL being taught for 20 minutes a day in a morning meeting and then not included for the rest of the school day. We see thousands upon thousands of dollars being spent on SEL programs without adequate professional development or classroom/schoolwide implementation. We want to see SEL every minute, every day, everywhere, and ongoing.

Our passion for assessment does not come from working at an assessment company or as a psychometrician although we have both run statistical data in our careers. While we love data, we primarily love qualitative data that tells a story, the numbers help show relevance. We have been drawn to using rubrics for our work in higher ed. As former practitioners in elementary, middle and high school, we have embraced other forms of assessment, other than standards based, norm referenced, bubble tests (no offense scantrons). As a Writing Project Fellow (of an affiliate of the National Writing Project), Cynthia discovered the power of writing as a means of expression and art, and as an award-winning educator in the field of technology, she has taught others how to integrate technology tools to facilitate learning and to support knowledge building through constructing podcasts, videos, and multimedia presentations.

In our 35+ years of being in education, we have seen thousands of commercially created assessments. In our Master of Arts in SEL program, our students analyze a variety of assessment assignments which are focused on assessment for accountability. The self-reports, observational checklists, teacher, student, and parent surveys are all created for the purpose of collecting data for accountability. While that information is needed by a specific audience, practitioners tell us that what they need are Student Empowered SEL formative assessments. When the student is at the center of the learning and at the center of the assessing, this provides a true SEL experience.
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CLASSROOM TEACHER AND STUDENTS?

So, why should you care? Why do we care? As the research on the effect of SEL deepens, there are many resources developed for assessing SEL programs, skills, and competencies. However, the literature is notably absent on assessment practices themselves that support learners with practices aligned with social and emotional learning. Assessment needs to be owned by the students as a developmental aspect of the process of learning progressions.

While data collected for accountability may be needed at the school, district or state level, practitioners tell us that what they need are the “whys” and “hows” in using SEL formative assessment for daily and weekly information to impact student SEL knowledge and skill acquisition.

This book blends assessment strategies commonly used in any classroom worldwide and contextualizes these tools and practices through the lens of SEL. We have compiled these assessing/assessment strategies which are primarily formative assessment tools, some paper based, some templates (from our companion website) and some have harnessed the power of digital tools to construct your own formative assessments. We have also included other forms of assessment, alternative assessments, authentic assessment portfolio-based assessment. Our masters level adult learners have been using ePortfolios for the last few decades to demonstrate competency and knowledge in various forms. They have come to understand that portfolios lead to self-assessment and reflection in their personal and professional growth—a highly effective SEL assessment tool.

You will find that you are already using some of these strategies, and through these chapters, you will learn why these tools work for assessing learning and how using the tools elicits an SEL skill or disposition. We sprinkle in solid research to justify why we need to be using formative assessment in all classrooms with all learners. Some focus on writing through reflection, others are performance-based checklists, and others are traditional quizzes and tests implemented in untraditional ways; we recommend ungraded tests for mastery. Applying everyday assessment strategies to measure improvement and learning is our primary objective.

Our goals for this book include learning how to think about assessing the “SEL Way,” how to use SEL assessing to provide feed-up, feedback, and feed forward to increase SEL competencies, and how to use SEL assessing FOR student learning to inform more effective SEL teaching. And that’s a lot of SEL! By assessing through the lens...
of SEL we have embedded intentional SEL that appeals to everyone. As educators, we have embedded SEL into our practice, honoring the brilliance of all learners. SEL assessing will make learners feel more self-aware, more self-managed, more socially aware, and create learners who make intentional decisions as individuals and other times to build relationships with others.

The world organization for the promotion of SEL, Karanga, sums up our belief in SEL.

In a complex, fast-moving world, it is imperative that we equip all learners for new challenges and opportunities. Evidence shows multiple long-term benefits from embedding Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) opportunities in education in both formal and non-formal contexts. SEL can contribute to more inclusive, dynamic, and productive schools, communities, and workplaces, and can in the long term save governments money and accelerate productivity. (The Salzburg Statement for Social and Emotional Learning, Salzburg Global Seminar, Fellows, 2018, December, p. 1)

And by the way, Karanga also says, “SEL is life skills.” We should not politicize SEL. Social and Emotional teaching and learning it is a human right.