



# Updating Social and Emotional Learning Guidelines for Teacher Training in Ghanaian Schools

## *2025 Capstone Workshop*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Pencils of Promise (“PoP”) is a nonprofit organization that builds schools, enables teacher support programming, and implements water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programs. Their mission centers around the delivery of quality education to children through collaboration with local governments and education ministries in the countries in which they operate. PoP has built over 600 schools and operates in Ghana, Laos, and Guatemala.

As part of their Teacher Support program, PoP tasked the SIPA Capstone team to update guidance around Social and Emotional Learning (“SEL”) practices, the integration of which has seen success in PoP schools in Ghana. PoP believes that a successful learning environment is integral to educational experience as a whole. The implementation of SEL in PoP schools centers around creating encouraging learning environments where students are set up to succeed.

PoP has requested the assistance of a SIPA Capstone Team to update SEL teaching guides, provide improvements in line with best practices, and create a new activity that can be incorporated into SEL lessons in Ghanaian schools.

The team undertook a literature review and desktop research, followed by fieldwork in Ho, Ghana where Capstone members conducted interviews with local PoP staff, Ghanaian Education Services, local teachers, and parents. Additionally, interviews with SEL experts from the United States (where SEL originates) were also conducted remotely. Utilizing the results to better understand Ghanaian culture, Ghanaian schools, SEL best practices, and PoP’s teacher training program, the team created a guide for future quantitative analysis of SEL’s success in Ho, Ghana, a new field day activity, updates to the SEL manual utilized by PoP, a handout to better inform parents of the benefits of SEL, and a presentation of findings to PoP’s leadership.

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# INTRODUCTION

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## Client Brief

Pencils of Promise (“PoP”) is a nonprofit organization with a mission to make quality education accessible to all children. PoP’s holistic approach is based on three pillars: building schools that are healthy and safe places to learn, ensuring that students have access to clean water and good hygiene practices through its Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) program, and expanding teachers’ access to digital resources and innovative classroom strategies like Social and Emotional Learning (“SEL”). PoP’s theory of change is built on strong partnerships with students, teachers, parents, local governments, and education ministries to ensure that communities are empowered to drive the change they want to see. With an annual budget of nearly \$4 million dollars, PoP has built over 600 schools,<sup>1</sup> trained over 3,000 teachers,<sup>2</sup> and met the educational needs of over 130,000<sup>3</sup> children across Ghana, Laos, and Guatemala.

## Ghana Country Overview

Ghana has important strategic significance in West Africa given its location along the Atlantic Ocean and its shared borders with Burkina Faso, Togo, and Cote D’Ivoire. Ghana’s population of nearly 34 million people<sup>4</sup> is predominantly composed of young, rapidly urbanizing, and globally and digitally connected Ghanaians.<sup>5</sup> The country is resource-rich and home to diverse ecosystems including rainforests, coastal wetlands, and grasslands.<sup>6</sup>

In 1957, Ghana became the first sub-saharan African nation to declare independence from a colonial government, sparking a wave of independence movements across the continent.<sup>7</sup> Although the country has experienced some recent governance challenges, it is considered one of Africa’s most robust democracies due to its multi-party system and culture of political participation.<sup>8</sup>

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1 Pencils of Promise. “School Builds.” Accessed April 12, 2025. <https://pencilsofpromise.org/our-work/school-builds/>.

2 Pencils of Promise. “Teacher Support.” Accessed April 12, 2025. <https://pencilsofpromise.org/our-work/teacher-support/>.

3 Pencils of Promise. “School Builds.” Accessed April 12, 2025. <https://pencilsofpromise.org/our-work/school-builds/>.

4 United States Department of State. “Ghana.” Accessed April 12, 2025. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/ghana/>.

5 International Trade Administration. “Ghana - Market Overview,” November 26, 2023. <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/ghana-market-overview>.

6 Botchway, Thomas Prehi. “Implementing Effective Environmental Policies for Sustainable Development: Insight into the Implementation of the CBD in Ghana.” Edited by Richard Meissner. *Cogent Social Sciences* 7, no. 1 (January 1, 2021): <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.1970893>.

7 “About Ghana – Ministry Of Foreign Affairs.” Accessed April 12, 2025. <https://mfa.gov.gh/index.php/about-ghana/>.

8 Oluwole, Victor. “Top 10 African Nations Leading in Democracy Index Rankings.” *Business Insider Africa*. <https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/lifestyle/top-10-african-nations-leading-in-democracy-index-rankings/y0p62pd>.

## Economic Context

Despite a steady decline in poverty in Ghana since the 1990s, the COVID-19 pandemic marked a turning point in this trend. Sluggish economic growth, constrained government spending, and high inflation have worsened living standards, driving more people into poverty and heightening the risk of food insecurity.<sup>9</sup> Ghana's economy is heavily reliant on the export of primary commodities such as cocoa and gold, which has made the country vulnerable to global price shocks.<sup>10</sup> Historically, economic growth has been characterized by volatility, especially as the agricultural sector remains vulnerable to unpredictable rainfall, rising temperatures, and lengthy dry periods.

Despite these challenges, the outlook for growth is optimistic. Ghana's GDP growth rose from 0.5% in 2020<sup>11</sup> to 2.9% in 2023,<sup>12</sup> with growth expected to reach 5.4% in 2025. In March 2025, Ghana's recently elected government announced plans to diversify the economy, address unemployment, and stabilize the Ghanaian cedi (GHS) through a range of new fiscal policies.<sup>13</sup>

## Language, Ethnicity, and Demographics

Ghana's rich diversity of languages, cultures, and peoples has been a source of pride throughout the country's history. Ghana is home to over 75 ethnic groups, including the Akan, Ewe, Mole-Dagbane, and Guan.<sup>14</sup> Although English is the official language, over 100 languages are spoken in Ghana, including the major language families Niger-Congo, Mande, and Volta-Niger.<sup>15</sup> In terms of religious make-up, Christians are the largest bloc at 71 percent, followed by Muslims at 20 percent, and other minority groups at 9 percent.<sup>16</sup>

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9 World Bank. "The World Bank in Ghana: Overview." Accessed April 12, 2025. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ghana/overview>.

10 Asante-Poku, Nana Amma; Van Huellen, Sophie. "How Commodity Exporting Countries like Ghana Have Been Hit by COVID-19." *The Conversation*, March 14, 2021. <http://theconversation.com/how-commodity-exporting-countries-like-ghana-have-been-hit-by-covid-19-155799>.

11 "Ghana - Market Overview," November 26, 2023. <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/ghana-market-overview>.

12 Agambila, Dorcas. "Ghana's GDP Growth Projected to Hit 5.4% in 2025." *Business Insider Africa*. <https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/markets/ghanas-gdp-growth-projected-to-hit-54-in-2025/r6qw9hl>.

13 EY. "Ghana's Finance Minister Presents 2025 Budget Statement and Economic Policy for FY2025 with Tax Implications." Accessed April 12, 2025.

[https://www.ey.com/en\\_gl/technical/tax-alerts/ghanas-finance-minister-presents-2025-budget-statement-and-economic-policy-for-fy2025-with-tax-implications](https://www.ey.com/en_gl/technical/tax-alerts/ghanas-finance-minister-presents-2025-budget-statement-and-economic-policy-for-fy2025-with-tax-implications).

14 Ghana High Commission Canada, Ghana Embassy Canada - Population. "Ghana High Commission Canada, Ghana Embassy Canada - Population." Accessed April 12, 2025. <https://ottawa.mfa.gov.gh/population.aspx>.

15 "How Many Languages Does Ghana Have? | GVI." Accessed April 12, 2025. <https://www.gviusa.com/blog/smb-how-many-languages-does-ghana-have/>.

16 United States Department of State. "Ghana." Accessed April 12, 2025.

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/ghana>

## Nongovernmental Organization Presence and International Relations

Ghana has demonstrated a strong commitment to civil society, and built deep relationships with international partners. An estimated 300,000 nongovernmental organizations (“NGOs”) operate in Ghana<sup>17</sup> yet many face significant challenges such as dependence on foreign donor funding and fragmentation.<sup>18</sup> In 2020, the West Africa Civil Society Institute published a policy paper recommending regulatory reforms, including clearer guidelines for civil society organizations’ (“CSOs”) fundraising, the establishment of an independent regulatory body, and protections against political interference.<sup>19</sup>

Ghana is seen as a reliable partner to African states, Europe, and the United States. Its government has emphasized private-sector growth and foreign investment, as well as the expansion of social services. Notably, Ghana maintains strong connections with the African diaspora, and has recently developed a national strategy to encourage African Americans to return, settle, and invest in the country.<sup>20</sup>

## Ghana Education System

In 1961, Ghana’s first Prime Minister, Kwame Nkrumah introduced the Education Act (Act 87) which established the principle of free, universal primary education for every Ghanaian. This landmark policy led to a rapid expansion of teacher training programs, boosting the annual number of newly qualified teachers from 420 to 1,108.<sup>21</sup> However, by the mid-1970s, the education sector experienced a sharp decline as a result of political instability, brain drain, corruption, and inadequate funding. However, the education sector has bounced back thanks to efforts to address poverty, make schools more accessible, and develop national teachers standards.<sup>22</sup>

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17 Commonwealth of Nations. “Sectors.” Accessed April 12, 2025.

[https://www.commonwealthofnations.org/sectors-ghana/civil\\_society/](https://www.commonwealthofnations.org/sectors-ghana/civil_society/)

18 “Snapshot of Civil Society in Ghana.” Affinity Group of National Associations, June 2015.

[https://www.civicus.org/images/Snapshot\\_of\\_CS\\_in\\_Ghana.pdf](https://www.civicus.org/images/Snapshot_of_CS_in_Ghana.pdf)

19 “Rapid Assessment of the Legal Environment for Civil Society Including Philanthropic Organisations in Ghana.” West African Civil Society Institute, n.d.

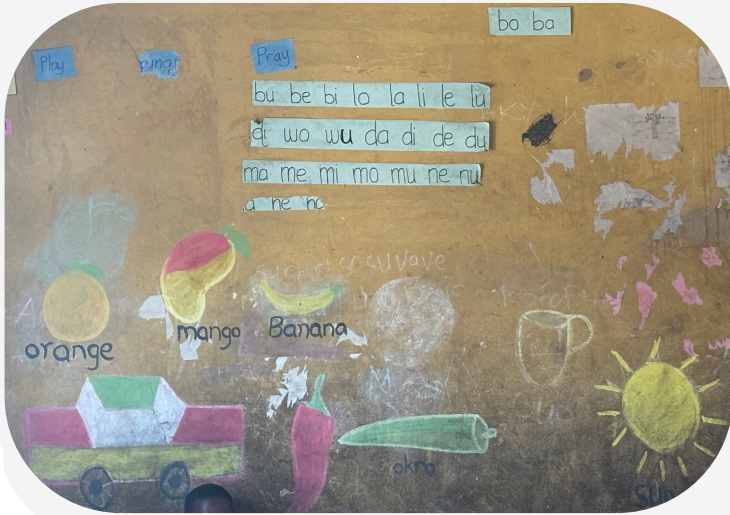
<https://wacsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Ghana-Rapid-Assessment-of-The-Legal-Environment-for-Civil-Society-Including-Philanthropic-Organisations.pdf>, pg 19

20 “Ghana Granted Citizenship to People from African Diaspora, Most Were Black Americans | AP News.” Accessed April 12, 2025. <https://apnews.com/article/ghana-diaspora-black-americans-citizenship-f0558892453aceb2eae1a7a6e2cb276d>.

21 Bonsu, Constance Osei, Ama Kyerewaa Preko, and Tetteh Terrence Thomas. “Ghana’s Educational Reform and Policies Towards Teachers’ Professional Development,” n.d. <https://www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd64840.pdf>

22 Ministry of Education Republic of Ghana. “National Teachers’ Standards for Ghana.” National Teaching Council, n.d.

[https://teachertaskforce.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/2017\\_MoE-Ghana\\_National-Teachers-Standards-for-Ghana\\_EN.pdf](https://teachertaskforce.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/2017_MoE-Ghana_National-Teachers-Standards-for-Ghana_EN.pdf)



*Kpando Kpodzi E.P in the  
Kpando Municipal District*



*Adzoatsi in the Ketu North  
Municipality District*



*Kpando Kpodzi E.P in the  
Kpando Municipal District*



*Gbefi in the Kpando Municipal district*

*Photo Credit: Zahra Hannan, Project Manager*

Today, Ghana’s education system operates on the 6-3-3-4 system, which consists of six years of primary school, three years of Junior High School, three years of Senior High School, and four years of university.<sup>23</sup> In addition to reading, writing, and mathematics, the goals of primary education include the promotion of attitudinal growth and cultural appreciation, civic engagement, healthy living, and critical thinking.<sup>24</sup> Although about 71% of Ghanaian children complete primary education, completion rates drop significantly in secondary education, with only 47% of children completing Junior High School and only 35% completing Senior High School.<sup>25</sup> This underscores the importance of primary education in the lives of all Ghanaians.

## Social and Emotional Learning (“SEL”)

Social and Emotional Learning (“SEL”) is the process through which “young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.”<sup>26</sup> As defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (“CASEL”), the five core competencies of SEL are as follows:<sup>27</sup>

- Self-awareness: the ability to understand your own emotions, thoughts, and values, and how they impact your behavior in different situations
- Self-management: the ability to manage your own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors to achieve your goals
- Social-awareness: the ability to understand and empathize with others, including people from diverse backgrounds
- Relationship skills: the ability to maintain healthy relationships with diverse individuals and groups
- Responsible decision-making: the ability to make caring and constructive decisions about your personal behavior and social interactions

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23 American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. “Ghana.” Accessed April 16, 2025. <https://www.aacrao.org/edge/country/ghana>.

24 Bonsu, Constance Osei, Ama Kyerewaa Preko, and Tetteh Terrence Thomas. “Ghana’s Educational Reform and Policies Towards Teachers’ Professional Development,” n.d., pg 214

25 Arthur, Agnes, Sakshi Mishra, and Mayeso Zenengaya. “Ghana Education Fact Sheets.” UNICEF Ghana Country Office, 2020.

26 Casel Schoolguide. “What Is SEL?” Accessed April 12, 2025. <https://schoolguide.casel.org/what-is-sel/what-is-sel/>.

27 CASEL. “What Is the CASEL Framework?” Accessed April 12, 2025. <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/>.

Research indicates that enhancing SEL improves academic outcomes in math and English, while also boosting attendance rates.<sup>28</sup> Studies also show a correlation between SEL programming and soft skills like improved social skills and student-teacher relationships and reduced impulsiveness.<sup>29</sup>

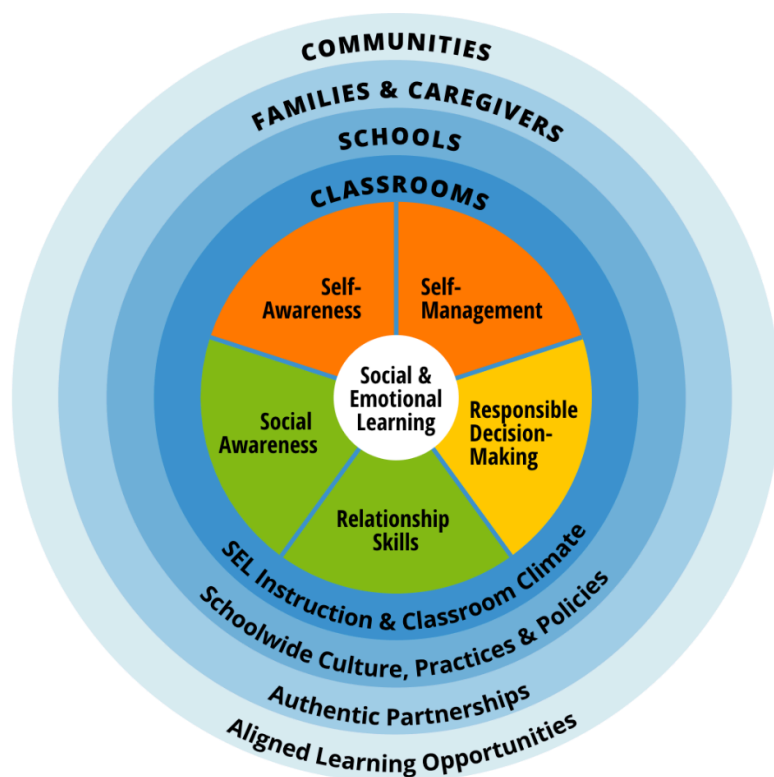


Figure 1. Visualization of the CASEL framework<sup>30</sup>

## SEL in PoP schools

In 2014, Dr. Allie Simmons, an SEL specialist, recommended that PoP adopt an SEL program and began to develop a curriculum. After conducting a Needs Assessment survey, PoP’s SEL program was piloted at four schools in Ghana. After this phase was positively evaluated, SEL

28 “What Do Changes in Social-Emotional Learning Tell Us About Changes in Academic and Behavioral Outcomes? | Policy Analysis for California Education,” July 1, 2020. <https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/changes-social-emotional-learning>.

29 Zhai, Fuhua, C. Cybele Raver, and Stephanie M. Jones. “Social and Emotional Learning Services and Child Outcomes in Third Grade: Evidence from a Cohort of Head Start Participants.” *Children and Youth Services Review* 56 (September 1, 2015): 42–51. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2015.06.016>.

30 CASEL. “What Is the CASEL Framework?” Accessed April 12, 2025. <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/>.

was implemented at twelve additional schools in Ghana in 2016. In 2017, the program was scaled up with the introduction of the Skills Enabling Emotional Development (“SEED”) training manual, which trained and empowered teachers to implement SEL activities in the classroom. The SEED manual contains games and activities to enable students in the upper primary grades to develop strong self-esteem and social skills, regulate their emotions, and learn about conflict-resolution. PoP has since introduced the Morning Meeting manual, which contains strategies to help students in the lower primary grades practice greeting, listening, responding, and problem-solving.

In Ghana, primary schools must apply for support from PoP, specifying whether they are seeking assistance with teacher training, WASH, or infrastructure. While PoP previously initiated outreach directly, schools demonstrated stronger engagement and commitment under the application-based model. The shift has fostered more meaningful partnerships between PoP and participating schools.<sup>31</sup> As a result, PoP has successfully implemented its SEL program in approximately 60 schools across Ghana.

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<sup>31</sup> Dei, Emmanuel. Pencils of Promise Programs Officer, Teacher Support. March 19, 2025.

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# PROJECT OBJECTIVE

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The primary objective of this capstone project is to provide PoP with updates for their SEL curriculum for primary schools in Ho, Ghana. The programmatic updates will be based on U.S. and international best practices and Ghanaian-specific cultural elements. PoP's aim is to equip their students and teachers with creative and modern tools that enhance their academic learning abilities and their interpersonal, everyday life skills.

The team's preliminary research consisted of a thorough background of Ghanaian culture and education system, a comprehensive look at SEL and its origins, PoP's implementation in Ghana, and various expert interviews. The interviewees ranged from SEL and early childhood education practitioners to former and current PoP staff in both Ghana and Guatemala. This research influenced the design and development of the methodology that would maximize the quality of data collected during the fieldwork. The team prepared a questionnaire for the Ghanaian Education Service, teachers, parents, and the College of Education.

The second stage in fulfilling PoP's objective was the fieldwork element of the project. The team traveled to Ho and conducted interviews in twelve schools where SEL was integrated into the curriculum. After analyzing the holistic data, the team produced an activity to improve, modifications to the curriculum, and a step by step quantitative project methodology plan for either PoP or future consultancies to use to track SEL related data and its outcomes.

The final deliverables of the project are as follows:

- Creating an inter-school field day with competitions in sports, dance, and academia
- Modifying the existing SEL manuals, including highlighting more female Ghanaian figures and recording demos for songs used in lessons
- Proposing a step-by-step quantitative project methodology framework for a more robust analysis of PoP's SEL interventions, including interviews with program graduates and a quantitative analysis of learning impacts
- Developing a parent handout to provide an overview of SEL

# METHODOLOGY

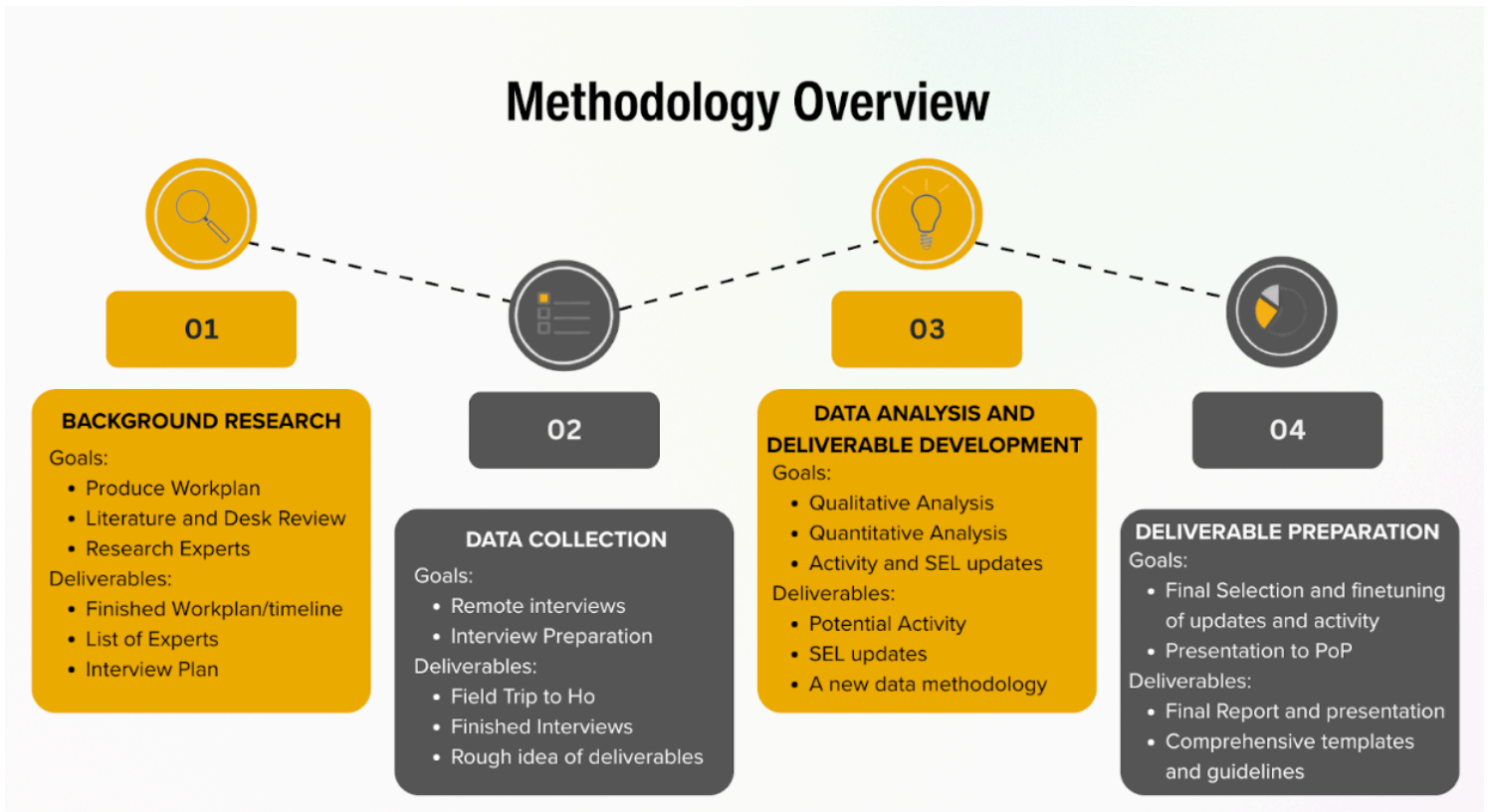


Figure 2. Methodology timeline

The methodology and data collection of this project was done in four phases. The first phase was background research so the team could be immersed in the academic exploration of SEL and Ghana in particular. This was done primarily through studying academic articles and CASEL information. Then once enough information was compiled, the team attended several meetings to share initial findings, and assembled a list of job titles and industries of experts to interview for further questioning. The second phase was the actual data collection which included various interviews with stakeholders and a trip to Ho, Ghana to observe and do in-person interviews. The third phase was the data analysis and brainstorming of potential deliverables, which was done with the team, and in conjunction with the PoP Ghana team to make sure it was in line with their priorities and values. The fourth and final phase was actually deciding on the deliverables and their presentation. During this phase, more expert interviews were conducted to finetune the recommendations and receive feedback to make them unique and far-reaching.

# Phase 1: Background Research and Preparation

## Literature Review and Desk Research

The team began by conducting literature reviews and desk research on SEL programming in the United States and around the world, with a special focus on challenges both during and post the COVID-19 pandemic. Desk research also included a thorough review of the Morning Meeting Manual, the SEED manual, and the 2019-2020 SIPA Capstone report on PoP's work in Laos. In addition to the academic literature, the team also conducted research on Ghana's education system – as well as the country's cultural and political dynamics – to understand the factors that influence SEL both inside and outside of Ghanaian classrooms. Learnings from this research informed the team's preparation for the trip, including the development of interview questionnaires.

## Instrument and Tool Development

The team identified four key stakeholder groups for interviews (Teachers, Parents, PoP Staff, and representatives from Ghana Education Services)<sup>32</sup> who could provide a diverse range of perspectives on SEL programming, from policy level implementation to the classroom to the home. After identifying the key stakeholders, the team developed four tailored interview templates for each group. While specific questions varied by stakeholder group, all interviews were designed to explore four core themes:

- The development and implementation of SEL programming, either at the specific school level or across Ghana
- The holistic impact of SEL on Ghanaian students and their broader communities
- The relationship between SEL and academic performance
- Other challenges observed by those working in Ghana's education sector

In addition to the surveys, the team also developed an informed consent form to ensure that interviewees clearly understood the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and how their information would be used. Both the informed consent form and the interview templates were shared with the client prior to finalization to ensure that the materials were comprehensive, culturally appropriate, and aligned with ethical research standards.

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<sup>32</sup> Students were excluded from the study due to ethical concerns and practical challenges related to obtaining informed consent from minors.

## Phase 2: Data Collection

### Field Interviews

The SIPA capstone team conducted a series of field interviews in Ghana's Volta and Eastern Regions to better understand the current state of PoP's SEL programming in Ghana. These qualitative interviews included conversations with parents, teachers, PoP staff across multiple departments, Ghana Education Service (GES) officers, teacher training coordinators, and key members of the Learning and Evaluation team.

It is important to note that some of the Capstone team members were accompanied by local staff that served as translators and guides for interviews and interactions in the field. The presence of staff during interviews may have introduced a degree of bias due to gender differences, educational differences, power differentials, and a possible language barrier between staff and interviewees. The Capstone team took these risks into consideration when writing interview questions and also when conducting interviews, understanding that these risks were embedded in the process. Capstone team members also tried to create privacy when conducting interviews as much as possible to help reduce bias.

The Capstone team sought to identify both the strengths of the current SEL model and the practical challenges to effective implementation, while capturing pertinent data and recommendations from those working directly with or within the education system. Across the board, stakeholders expressed support for the core philosophy of SEL. Overall, the field interviews confirmed that PoP's SEL programming is valued by teachers, coaches, and education officials alike, but that greater clarity, contextualization, and support are needed to scale its impact.

### Remote Interviews

The team also conducted multiple interviews with SEL experts across multiple organizations in the U.S. and Guatemala. Interviews were conducted using Google Meetings and Zoom. Interviews with PoP staff in Guatemala and from headquarters were useful in that they provided information about their own experiences implementing SEL in a PoP context. Interviews with experts who helped create and define SEL itself also provided valuable insights into how updates could be integrated into the PoP curriculum in Ghana in line with best practices.

# Phase 3: Data Analysis and Deliverable Development

## Interviews

The SIPA capstone team conducted a total of 57 interviews in a mixture of in-person and remote modalities. 49 interviews were conducted in-person in the Volta and Eastern regions of Ghana at the following schools:

- HoHoe Newtown (A & B)
- Kpando Kpodzi E.P.
- Gbefi United RC Primary School
- New Somanya Methodist Primary
- Somanya MA Primary School
- Adjikpo Yokunya RC Primary
- Atua St. Paul Anglican
- Amedzorfe E.P.
- AMECO Demonstration
- Adaklu Dave Salvation Army
- Adzoati
- Afiadenyigba

These interviews were conducted with teachers of varying levels of experience and parents/guardians, including grandparents and other relatives. Expert interviews to further understand the SEL landscape, including best practices, were conducted virtually with representatives of the following organizations:

- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional: Advancing Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
- Pencils of Promise: Guatemala
- Literacy Inc.

## Coding & Word Cloud

Key ideas and themes related to SEL were identified as part of the literature review process. Selection criteria for key ideas and themes included relevancy to the five SEL pillars, frequency of appearance in stakeholder feedback, and connection to SEL best practices. Transcripts of interviews were reviewed in order to identify common themes. A collection of common themes was then reviewed for the presence of key terms, which were converted into a word cloud to visually represent the feedback received from stakeholders regarding SEL and PoP programming (see page 20).

## Activity Proposal

In developing an activity to propose to PoP Ghana, the SIPA capstone team prioritized the following criteria:

- Feasibility of implementation
- Replicability of activity
- Resources required
- Connection to SEL
- Opportunity to incorporate Ghanaian culture
- Community development

## Feasibility of Implementation

The PoP Field Day was chosen as it operates on a simple design that can be tailored to each region's needs, resources, and preferences. It builds off existing strengths and shared goals.

## Replicability of Activity

The PoP Field Day is designed to occur on an annual basis that allows for sufficient planning and implementation time. Funding strategies to offset the financial burden of the activity have been included and are aimed at ensuring long-term sustainability.

## Resources Required

The intention was to develop an activity that did not require extensive financial or material resources and which did not add significantly to teachers' everyday workload. The PoP Field Day relies on the pooled resources and personnel of a region's schools, requiring only materials that are easily accessible.

## Connection to SEL

The PoP Field Day closely matches with the relationship skills and self management pillars of SEL. It intentionally targets the physical, social, and emotional development of students and offers an opportunity for students to connect with their peers.

## Opportunity to Incorporate Ghanaian Culture

The PoP Field Day directly addresses feedback from parents and guardians expressing their desire to see more influence of Ghanaian culture in school activities. The Field Day event will seek to incorporate elements such as traditional foods, music, and dance.

## Community Development

The PoP Field entails connecting neighboring schools and allows the opportunity for peer-to-peer relationships, teacher-to-teacher relationships, and the involvement of parents and guardians.

## Quantitative Research Proposal

The SIPA Capstone team recognizes the value of having quantitative data on the efficacy of SEL and its effect on student behavior, academics, career prospects, and life outcomes. Quantitative data can be helpful to measure impact, inform future programming, and garner support from donors. The team incorporated expert advice along with the insights we gained from the work currently done by the PoP Research & Evaluation team to create a potential quantitative research proposal that will track the impact of PoP's SEL model on its students over time.

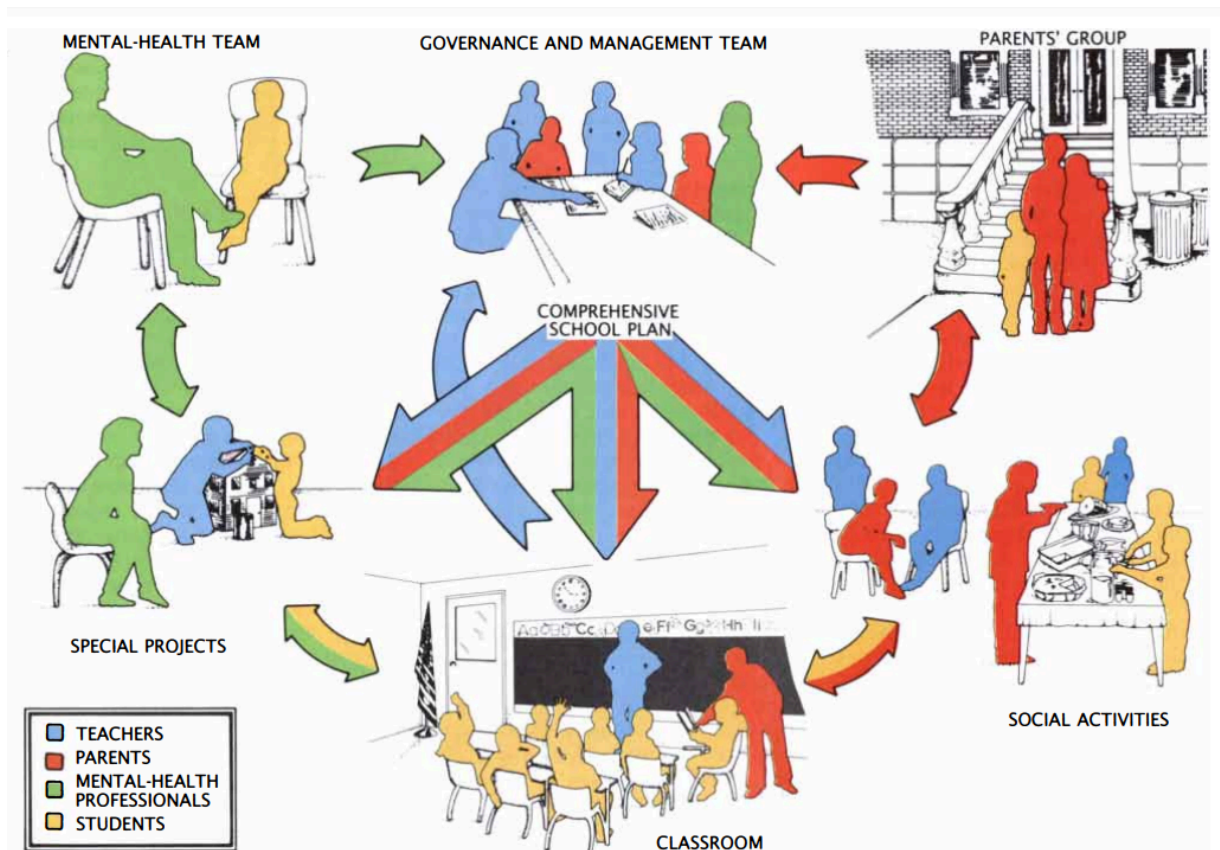


Figure 3. Image from “*Educating Poor Minority Children*”, a paper from the Scientific American November 1988 journal, demonstrating that a multipronged effort targeting a child’s academic and personal life is necessary for their development and functioning in society.

# Phase 4: Deliverable Preparation

## Outline for Further Quantitative Analysis

After conducting interviews with PoP staff, teachers and administrators in PoP schools, and parents of children who attend PoP schools, the capstone team considered multiple options to analyze the qualitative data gathered as detailed above. To provide a more comprehensive analysis, the team also examined the feasibility of conducting a quantitative analysis of data gathered and future outcomes. Due to time constraints, a full regression analysis was determined to be unfeasible, but it should be considered as a next step to be undertaken in the future by Pencils of Promise.

In addition to brainstorming possible dependent and independent variables within the team, the capstone members consulted previous interviews with PoP evaluation staff to determine what quantitative research methods have already been employed and put forth possible metrics for quantitative analysis to SEL experts consulted, PoP administrative staff, and other experts. Utilizing this feedback, the team constructed a possible methodology for future quantitative analysis, should the PoP team in Ghana or the PoP global team decide to undertake further research.

## Additions to the SEL Manual

The team was originally tasked with evaluating the existing manual to provide edits and revisions, in addition to any possible new activities for students or any initiatives to improve SEL implementation. In addition to a plan for further quantitative research as detailed above, the team put forth recommendations for edits to PoP's existing SEL manual, including a proposed new activity.

### 1: General Edits to the Manual

Following a comprehensive review of the current SEL manual utilized by PoP, interviews with prominent SEL experts, and observations of SEL integration on the ground at schools in Ghana, the team compiled several practical recommendations to help ensure smoother implementation of SEL ideals.

### **New Activity: Cross-School Field Day**

The team was tasked with evaluating the feasibility of adding a new activity to the SEL manual. Following observation of PoP schools in Ghana, the capstone members discussed possible activities that would incorporate SEL core competencies while being engaging and interesting for all students involved. A cross-school field day was unanimously agreed upon for its educational value, engaging nature, and low cost.

### **SEL Handout for Parents**

Discussions with parents while conducting fieldwork indicated some gaps in understanding of SEL and how it is integrated at PoP schools. The team aggregated parent feedback, determined gaps in understanding, and drafted a succinct and concise overview of Social and Emotional Learning to provide to parents.

### **Presentation to Pencils of Promise Leadership**

The goal of this presentation is to present the team's findings, to more deeply explain the above deliverables, and provide PoP leadership with an overview of the team's findings. Thus, the presentation outline is as follows: 1.) Overall Insights, 2.) Methodology Overview, 3.) Overview of SEL Manual Updates, 4.) Description of Field Day Activity 5.) Description of Quantitative Analysis Proposal, 6.) Remaining Questions and Limitations.

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# FINDINGS

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## Ghanaian Culture

Ghanaian culture is vibrant, diverse, and deeply rooted in community, religion and tradition. The majority of the population is Christian, but there are Muslims and other religious minorities as well, with overall decent relations and not much conflict. Due to its colonial history, the majority of the population speaks English, as well as indigenous Ghanaian languages and dialects. Social norms emphasize respect for elders, hospitality, and communal values.

### Customs and Religion

Greetings are considered very important, and it's customary to ask about a person's well-being before starting a conversation. During the fieldwork in schools, every conversation with teachers, children, and parents began with "Hello, how are you?" and when we responded with "Fine" or "Good", "How are you?" The response was "We are fine, thank God." There is a huge emphasis on courtesy and connecting to religion. The country also has a laid-back atmosphere—people generally are not in a rush and are very hospitable.

### Family Life

Family plays a central role in everyday life, with extended families often living close together and contributing to collective decision-making. Children are raised with a strong sense of discipline, respect, and responsibility toward the family and especially elders. In the more rural areas like in Ho, because of the scarcity of resources, children generally do not have an issue with motivation of completing their school work. Access to education is a privilege that is not taken lightly.

### Gender Norms

Gender norms in Ghana are shifting, but traditional roles still have influence. Men are typically viewed as primary breadwinners, while women often manage the household and are key players in informal economic sectors such as market trading, food production, and the care economy. However, education is increasingly becoming a tool for challenging these norms. Access to education has expanded, as seen with programming like the ones PoP provides, and there is growing recognition of the importance of schooling for both boys and girls. In rural communities, though, girls are still more likely to face early marriage and household duties that interrupt their education. This however, is rapidly changing and as barriers to education are



# Schools in Ghana

29 interviewees in 11 schools painted a picture for us to further understand the challenges faced by teachers and other stakeholders in Ghana, along with their recommendations and requests, listed as follows:

- Lack of resources such as Teacher Learning Materials. Some teachers also mentioned they used their personal devices as visual aids for the students, or lacking space in the classroom.
- Some teachers are overwhelmed with the number of subjects and initiatives, and schools are heavily measured by Ghanaian Education Services on the outcome of the students.
- Several PoP staff and teachers noted that SEED was the least implemented component of the program, often due to unclear instructions, time constraints, or misalignment with existing lesson plans.
- Teachers becoming “parents of students” in school also have to assess students holistically, especially students who are not living with biological parents and deal with a lack of food or money.
- Student teachers from the College of Education in the classroom, although not coming everyday, are found to be helpful especially for kindergarten and writing the Morning Message on the chalkboard.
- The Learning and Evaluation team acknowledged that more comprehensive tools are needed to assess whether students are internalizing and applying SEL competencies over time - developing a robust feedback loop with other stakeholders to foster continuous improvement would be helpful.
- Opportunities to integrate PoP’s SEL model into government-led teacher training programs, to advocate for more formal time allocations for SEL in the school day, and to further involve parents and caretakers are welcomed.

## Relationship between Teacher, Students, Parents, and Pencils of Promise Program Staff

The stakeholder interviews and observations revealed some interesting details about the day to day life of the teachers, school interaction with parents, as well as with Pencils of Promise Program Staff and government interaction:

- The teachers are posted by the Ghanaian Education Service after graduating from College of Education, teachers can be posted in an area far from their hometown and have to relocate. The teachers can be from different ethnicities with the learners, for example, a teacher from the Volta Region can also teach in the Eastern Region.
- Most of the teachers from our pool are female, with various teaching experience (2 years to 20 years).
- Teachers are the implementer of the curriculum, and teachers are not involved in the development of curriculum.
- Teachers only taught one grade throughout the year, although the teacher can be assigned to a different grade in the next academic year. Kindergarten class average have smaller students in the classroom, on average, 15 - 25 students compared to the lower primary (20-45 students), and upper primary (40-75 students).
- Teacher observed students through 'entry behavior', and try to approach students that are misbehaving (e.g late to school) or do not want to participate in class, considering aspects such as whether the child needs at home are fulfilled.
- Various parents' involvement depending on each school and grades, some teachers faced difficulties in engaging parents, especially parents who do not have resources to properly work with their children, and teachers have to reach out through phone to collaborate with parents. On the other hand, some schools have more engaged parents where they collect report cards and attend PTA meetings, to name a few.
- Based on observations, Pencils of Promise program staff have a close relationship with teachers; the program staff were the trainers of the teachers on various topics including SEL.
- Ghanaian Education Services provided information about schools that could benefit from intervention by Pencils of Promise.
- Pencils of Promise staff described Morning Meetings as providing safe spaces for students to express themselves and build trust with peers and teachers.

- Pencils of Promise staff also noted that systemic challenges such as high teacher turnover and large classroom sizes compound implementation difficulties.
- Teachers recognized that students who were emotionally regulated and socially connected performed better academically and were more cooperative in class.
- Stakeholders repeatedly stressed the importance of incorporating cultural traditions such as storytelling, drumming, and proverbs.
- Language was noted to be a barrier in some schools - translating SEL materials into local languages or offering bilingual support could improve comprehension and participation in the future.

### Education Policies

Through the interviews with headteachers, Ghanaian Education Services, and St. Teresa's College of Education, Hohoe the team gathered key information on education policies such as:

- The schools are categorized as such: Kindergarten A & B, Lower Primary 1-3, and Upper Primary 4-6.
- Primary school has 3 terms each year (Term 1, Term 2, Term 3); each term is 3 months long.
- Teachers taught several subjects for Lower Primary (English, Ewe, Religious and Moral Education, Social Studies, Mathematics) and each teacher managed more specialized subjects for Upper Primary.
- Subjects are taught primarily in English although Ewe and Krobo language were spoken during Morning Meeting with kindergarten learners who had difficulties in translating some words. Some schools also teach French language as part of their subjects
- Some schools have assembly in the morning, worship, and DL (Differentiated Learning) as part of their routines.
- The focus of Ghanaian education is on improving reading and literacy skills, and more recently acknowledgements have emerged of the importance of socio-emotional development or child-centric, holistic, and balanced curriculum, noting that it has long-term benefits in developing Ghanaian human capital.
- Ghanaian education was more teacher-centered in the past and is currently more learner-centered.
- There are recent changes in the College of Education curriculum – focusing more on practice from the first semester, with student teachers assigned to classrooms.

# SEL in Ghana

## National Curriculum & Teacher Training

SEL is intentionally laced throughout the national curriculum, reflecting the commitment of GES to shift the attention of schools away from academics and towards more holistic learning and assessment practices. Integration of SEL into the curriculum is ongoing. While its presence is evident across subjects in the national curriculum, classroom time devoted to SEL is still limited to PoP schools and teacher training on SEL is still developing. According to the Ghana College of Education, most teachers receive at least exposure to SEL prior to graduation, both through PoP formalized training and indirectly through coursework influenced by SEL. In addition, education students' curriculum heavily prioritizes experiential learning, placing student teachers in classrooms that may already incorporate SEL at early stages of their training.

## Community Perspectives

SEL is largely welcomed and understood by communities in Ghana on at least a basic level. The core values and ideas driving SEL align well with the Ghanaian culture and the benefit parents and guardians notice in their students generally encourages a positive outlook on SEL as a whole. While many parents and guardians were unaware of what SEL represented, they often recognized the terms Morning Meeting and SEED and could speak to the effects and benefits of having SEL as part of students' education in PoP schools. Both parents and guardians who were previously aware of SEL in PoP schools and those who were less familiar with it expressed interest in learning more about the model and the activities their students did in school.

## PoP Feedback on Teacher Training

PoP has developed a model of teacher training that provides guidance and support, providing teachers with real-time feedback and tailored coaching. Teachers additionally receive support from peer teachers through Professional Learning Communities, where teachers join to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and craft plans to address teaching concerns. Head teachers are also a source of support and evaluate practicing teachers on an ongoing basis. Overall, teachers appear to respond well to training materials on SEL. Morning Meeting is especially well-received by teachers and fidelity to the model and training appear strong. PoP identified SEED implementation as an area of concern since teacher performance in this segment is less strong, especially in terms of following the incremental nature of the SEED model.

Lower performance in SEED may be attributed to lack of resources, competing priorities for teachers, and teacher concerns about additional workloads.

### **Teacher Feedback on SEL**

Teachers overwhelmingly considered SEL to be a positive addition to the learning environment and understood the benefits it offered students. Several PoP teachers also identified SEL as a strategy that improved their experience of teaching by making it more effective at engaging and connecting with their students. Teachers also generally reported feeling comfortable and confident teaching SEL and felt they had sufficient support if they needed help. Teacher performance generally correlated positively with the length of time PoP had been present in schools.

Concerns around SEL primarily included not having sufficient resources to carry out the activities as they are outlined in the manual. Some students were reported to adapt to SEL activities more readily than others, especially for younger students and those in the earlier stages of learning English. Additional time and one-on-one support were common strategies to help students catch up to their peers and engage fully in class activities.

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# DELIVERABLES

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## 1. Future Quantitative Analysis

### Quasi-Experimental Study

Due to time constraints, the group's data methodology relied heavily on questionnaires, and a holistic approach of using word clouds and suggestions from stakeholders to gauge interviewees' feelings and thoughts on SEL. We were not able to properly measure the impact of SEL on the students either, and only used evidence by word of mouth from parents and teachers, which indicated that it overall leads to better behavioral and academic outcomes. To create a procedure to develop more accurate results that show quantifiable outcomes that may make it easier for PoP to evaluate how effective their programming is, while also showing evidence for donor stewardship purposes, the team proposes a Quantitative Data Methodology study as the first part of their deliverables.

This study will have two components: the first will be measuring SEL's short term outcomes by having controlled groups and treatment groups.

- The controlled group(s) will be a classroom that has never had SEL curriculum, and the treatment group(s) will have SEL curriculum.
- This can be either a single-variable or a multi-variable regression analysis, but we recommend multi-variable because of the different elements in the groups that may affect outcomes (age, distance traveled to school, gender, etc.). With a single-variable analysis, there will be many lurking variables that the multivariate study can address. This will lead to more accurate results.

Next, uniform techniques will stand as a controlled variable, and then students' academic performance and other behavioral indicators that could be a result of SEL will be tracked. The same outcomes will be tracked in students that are in schools that do not have a SEL curriculum as a comparison. If the compared classrooms are in the same region, have the same size, and age range, this provides enough controlled elements and limits extraneous variables.

## Quasi-Experimental Study

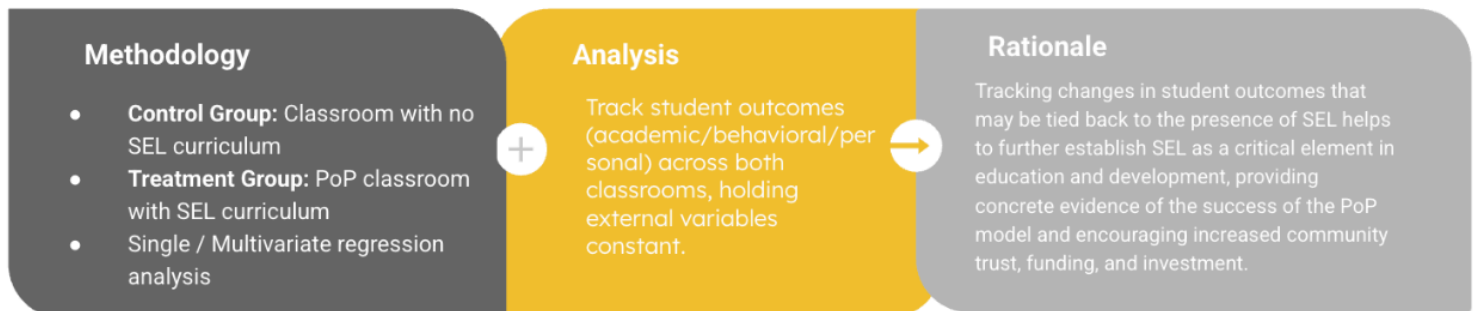


Figure 5. Flow chart illustrating quasi-experimental study methodology

### Example:

#### Group 1: SEL CLASSROOM

Controlled variable: Morning meeting style (dance, songs, introductory remarks, feelings sharing)

Outcomes to look for: Raising hands more/more participation, increased academic performance, participating in group activities, confidence, being helpful, active listening

#### Group 2: SEL CLASSROOM 2

Controlled variable: Morning meeting style (dance, songs, introductory remarks, feelings sharing)

Outcomes to look for: Raising hands more/more participation, increased academic performance, participating in group activities, confidence, being helpful, active listening

#### Group 3: NON-SEL CLASSROOM

No morning meeting or SEL activity

Outcomes to look for: Raising hands more/more participation, increased academic performance, participating in group activities, confidence, being helpful, active listening

Tracking these will be done over a similar time period. Group 1 will be compared to Group 2, and Group 1 will be compared to Group 3, and Group 2 will be compared to Group 3.

The data analysis must be done through a program like R, STATA, Python, or Excel to compare data sets and find potential statistically significant differences. The goal is to prove that SEL leads to positive behaviors and outcomes for students, as our interviewing research has indicated. Should this be successful, it would be a stronger and more credible source.

The second component to the procedure is a long term tracking methodology, or longitudinal study, that will keep track of how SEL has impacted students into adulthood. This requires years of consistency: interviewing students during their school years and following up post graduation.

This component will be comprised of questionnaires and spreadsheets keeping track of students' grades throughout the school year.

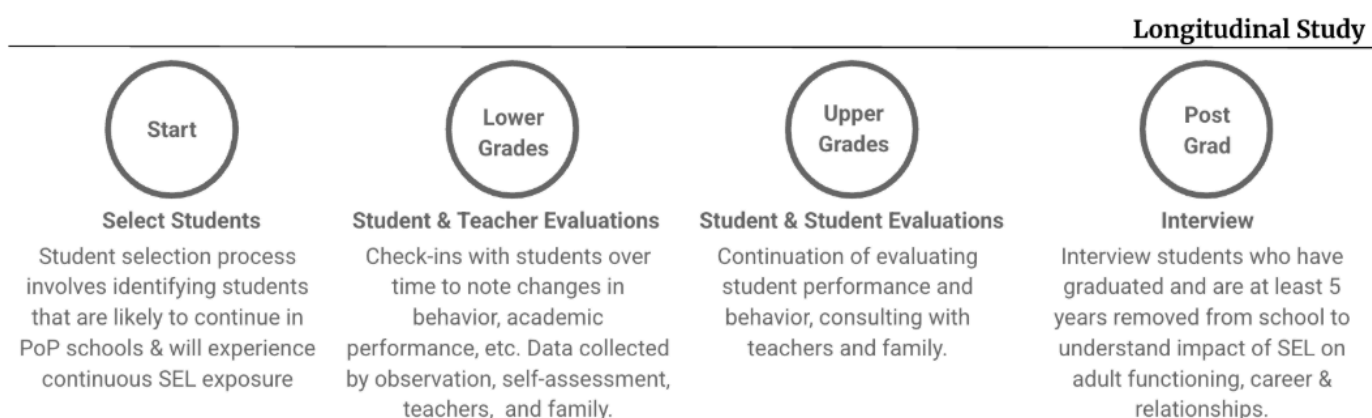


Figure 6. Flow chart demonstrating longitudinal study methodology

## 2. New Activity: Field Day



### Description

Depending on the size of the schools - a multi-school competitive field day, where students from various schools can come together and compete in sports, academic competitions, put on musical performances and participate in creative and visual arts. There will be larger prizes and small tokens for the students to take home. It will also include food and drinks. This will require event planning at least 4 months ahead, and a funding plan created in the previous fiscal year.

### Reasoning

To create a large and significant event to look forward to in the school year, as emulated by cultures around the world. This will build teamwork skills, encourage good sportsmanship, and build good rapport with students from different neighborhoods and communities. All of this contributes to SEL teaching and learning, and gives students a positive association with academics and education.

### Logistics

Event planning - each school needs a team of volunteers to help organize this event, which will be made up of staff, teachers, and parents. These volunteers will meet for months leading up to the Field Day and be responsible for organizing the timing and schedule of events throughout the day.

### Funding

PoP should use their celebrity ties to perhaps reach out to the managing teams of Ghanaian soccer players (i.e. Thomas Partey of Arsenal) and request a partnership where they can fund the sports element of it.

Additional funding from national development organizations can also be considered. For example, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (“JICA”) considers the nexus of sport and development an important goal. Combined with JICA’s aim to spread Japanese culture, of which field days are a treasured component, a long-term partnership could be explored.

There must be funds for a space to use, all of the resources for the activities, food and drinks, and transportation for students and families.

## 3. Modification Suggestions for SEL Manual

Based on interviews with the PoP program team and primary school teachers, with a focus on teachers as the main users of the Morning Meeting and SEED Manuals, the Capstone team developed the following suggestions for the manual:

### Formatting

Rearrange the sequence of activities in each step, term, or grade based on the resources required for teachers to prepare (e.g., no resources needed, paper, cards, beads, music playback, audio/video recordings, classroom space, etc.), and indicate the corresponding level of resource intensity. See Appendices B and D for the suggested activity order to be adapted in the updated version of the manual.

### Decision Tree

To be incorporated in the next iteration of Morning Meeting Manual and SEED Manual. See Appendices C and E for suggested decision-making trees for teachers.

### Formatting (Morning Meeting)

Rearrange the 'Interactive Modeling' (pp. 17–18) and 'Routine & Practice' (pp. 18–19) sections after all components of the Morning Meeting have been fully covered to ensure a logical flow.

### Content Update for Morning Meeting Manual

Based on interviews, record audio or video of the lyrics or the exercise if possible, as some teachers indicated instructions were not clear. Although this component was not covered entirely in training, teachers can look up activities before teaching. The Capstone team also has provided additional suggestions or examples as references to modify the Morning Meeting Manual.

Morning Meeting Component	Activity	Audio/Video Recording	Additional Questions/ Examples
Greetings			
Good day! My name is...	Greeting A - Round <hr/> Welcome Chat	<div style="text-align: center;">✓</div> <hr/> <div style="text-align: center;">✓</div>	
Sharing	<p>Before sharing begins, the teacher will think of a question or topic to share with the students to address in pairs</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the first thing you do when you wake up?</li> <li>• What do you do to help your family at home?</li> <li>• Who do you live with at home?</li> <li>• What makes you happy?</li> <li>• What do you do when you feel sad?</li> <li>• Who is your best friend and why?</li> <li>• If you had a superpower, what would it be?</li> <li>• If you could be any animal, what would you be?</li> <li>• What is your favorite holiday or celebration?</li> <li>• What special food do you eat on holidays?</li> </ul>

Group Activity (Energizer)	Tongue Twister	✓	<i>Kojo cooks koko in a clean clay cup, Kofi comes to Kojo's koko shop, Kojo says, "Kofi, come and sip hot koko!"</i>
	Zip, Zap, Pop	✓	
	Soul Treatment	✓	
	My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean	✓	
	This Old Man	✓	
	Old MacDonald's Farm	✓	
Morning Message			

Figure 7. Analysis of activities in Morning Meeting Manual requiring audio/video recording for teacher's reference, and other additional resources

## Content Update for SEED Manual

### More topics for Quiz Show questions (Term One - Primary Four)

- Question about the major regions or cities of Ghana: Kumasi, Ho, Cape Coast.
- Question about synonyms and antonyms for common English words.
- Questions about translation of common words from English to a local language (e.g., Twi, Ewe) and vice versa.

### More female Ghanaian figures - Thoughts of the Day (Term One - Primary Five and Primary Six)

The following formatting is recommended to be utilized in the manual to ensure ease of understanding:



Figure 8. To be added as a larger picture in the appendix of the SEED manual

## Additional Female Figures to be Added to the Manual:



Figure 9. Efua Sutherland<sup>34</sup>

### **Efua Sutherland**

Efua Theodora Sutherland (born 27 June 1924 – 2 January 1996) was a Ghanaian playwright, director, dramatist, children's author, poet, educationalist, researcher, child advocate, and cultural activist. Her works include the plays *Foriwa* (1962), *Edufa* (1967) and *The Marriage of Anansewa* (1975). She founded the Ghana Drama Studio, the Ghana Society of Writers, the Ghana Experimental Theatre, and a community project called the Kodzidan (Story House). As Ghana's earliest playwright-director, she was an influential figure in the development of modern Ghanaian theatre, and helped to introduce the study of African performance traditions at university level. She was also a pioneering African publisher, establishing the company Afram Publications in Accra in the 1970s.

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<sup>34</sup> Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). Efua Sutherland. Wikipedia. Retrieved May 2025, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Efua\\_Sutherland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Efua_Sutherland)



Figure 10. Prof. Akua Kuenyehia<sup>35</sup>

### **Prof. Akua Kuenyehia**

Akua Kuenyehia (born 1947) is a Ghanaian academic and lawyer who served as judge of the International Criminal Court (ICC) from 2003 to 2015. She also served as First Vice-president of the Court. She was one of the three female African judges at the ICC.

Kuenyehia represented Ghana on the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) committee in 2003 and worked hard to contribute to its reputation and influence. Kuenyehia was educated at Achimota School, University of Ghana and Somerville College, Oxford. She has spent most of her professional career teaching at the University of Ghana, as Dean of Law, and as a visiting professor at other institutions including Leiden University and Temple University. She is the President of Mountcrest University College, Ghana. The law faculty building at the University of Ghana, Legon, was named in joint honour of President John Atta Mills and Kuenyehia.

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<sup>35</sup> Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). Akua Kuenyehia. Wikipedia. Retrieved May 2025, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akua\\_Kuenyehia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akua_Kuenyehia)



Figure 11. Adjoa Bayor<sup>36</sup>

### Adjoa Bayor

Grace Adjoa Bayor (popularly known as Adjoa Bayor, born 17 May 1979) is a Ghanaian former footballer who played as a midfielder. She has captained the Ghana women's national team. Bayor was part of the Ghana women's national football team at the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup in the United States. She was a member of the World All Stars team to play against the China women's national football team in April 2007 at Wuhan, China. She has played for Ghatel Ladies in Accra, Ghana and has also played for FC Indiana in the United States recently. Bayor joined on 21 January 2009 to FF USV Jena. She was selected in 2018 by CAF to assist Deputy Secretary in football and development Anthony Baffoe to conduct the draw for Africa Women Cup of Nations.

### Remove “Jerry Lee Rice”

Football is not as common as soccer in the Ghanaian context, therefore, this figure can be removed due to lack of recognition.

<sup>36</sup> Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). Adjoa Bayor. Wikipedia. Retrieved May, 2025, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adjoa\\_Bayor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adjoa_Bayor)


## Additional Activities to Add to SEED Manual

Adopted from an interview with Jessica McEvily (Educator/Assistant Principal, Greenwich, Connecticut) and Second Step SEL Worksheet from the United States.

### Solving Problems

**Grade 4, Unit 3**  
**Lesson 17: Solving Problems, Part 2**

*Home Link*

 Name: \_\_\_\_\_

We all have problems sometimes—even adults! But now you have some simple steps to follow to help you and your family members solve problems. With an adult family member, think of a common problem you have at home. Work through each of the Problem-Solving Steps together. Then try your solution!

**Say the Problem Without Blame:**

<b>Think of Solutions:</b> Solution 1	<b>Think of Solutions:</b> Solution 2	<b>Think of Solutions:</b> Solution 3
<b>Explore Consequences:</b> + ----- -	<b>Explore Consequences:</b> + ----- -	<b>Explore Consequences:</b> + ----- -

**Pick the Best Solution:**

Figure 12. Adopted “Solving Problems” from Grade 4, Unit 3 (Second Step SEL Worksheet)

## Thank You Card

Objective: To help students practice gratitude and express appreciation through a simple craft activity.

### Warm-Up Discussion

Ask the class:

- "Who is someone you are thankful for?"
- "What is something kind someone has done for you?"
- Encourage students to name people like their parents, teachers, classmates, or even farmers or doctors.

### Demonstrate the Activity

Show a sample "Thank You" card (if available). Explain that they will create a card to say thank you to someone special.

### Card-Making Time

Demonstrate activity for students and assist them as they proceed with the process.

- Fold the paper in half to make a card.
- On the front, write "Thank You" and decorate with drawings (e.g., hearts, stars, flowers).
- Inside the card, write a short message. For example:
- "Thank you for helping me with my homework. You are kind and I am happy to have you."
- Add a drawing of the person or what the student is thankful for.

### Sharing

Invite a few students to show their cards and read their messages aloud (optional but encouraged).

# PARENT HANDOUT

This handout is to share information about Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and why it is a part of your child’s education. The goals of these pillars are to help students build skills that will support them throughout childhood and the rest of their lives. Building these skills helps students manage their emotions, make good choices, handle difficult situations, treat others with respect and empathy, and succeed in school and careers.

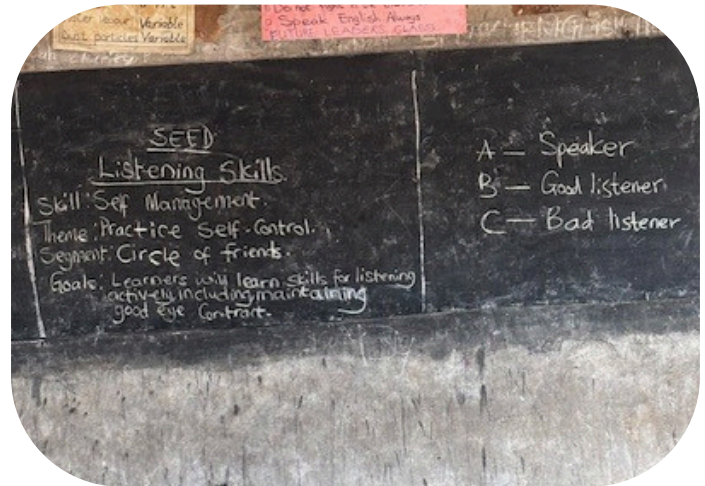
## The Pillars of SEL

self-awareness • relationship skills • self-management • responsible decision-making • social awareness



## The Morning Meeting and Skills Enabling Emotional Development

In PoP schools, Morning Meeting and Skills Enabling Emotional Development (SEED) are part of SEL. Morning Meeting is an activity that welcomes students into the classroom each morning and invites them to share and connect with each other and their teachers. It is designed to help students feel comfortable and prepared for the day ahead while helping teachers understand their students better. The SEED curriculum has activities that engage students and make learning fun, helping students to learn better and feel motivated to attend school every day.



*The Morning Meeting combines short academic activities with dance, music, and games to make the classroom into a fun environment where they are excited to learn. SEED activities for older students help to build confidence, develop friendships with their peers, and manage the challenges that come with growing up.*

## Why SEL is Essential: The Big Picture

SEL helps students do better in school by improving their ability to focus and engage more with their lessons and teachers. Better academic success can help students have more opportunities after graduating, including better jobs. Many careers today require students to be able to handle stressful situations, develop relationships with clients, communicate clearly, and work with people from different backgrounds. SEL helps students to develop these skills, setting them up for success in their future.



PoP's SEL activities are built on the values of respect, diversity, equity, service above self, collaboration, and integrity and seeks to help students practice these values at home, at school, and in their communities.



## 5. Final Presentation to Pencils of Promise

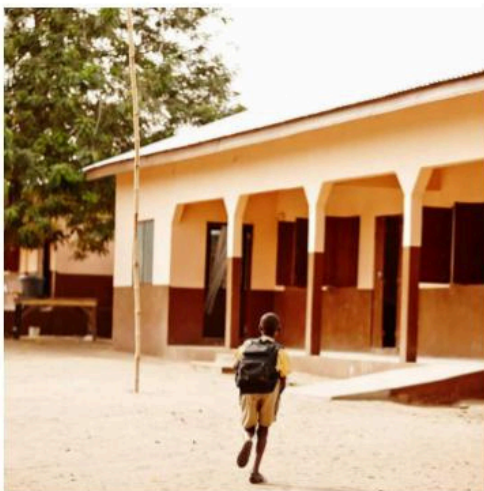
# Pencils of Promise



Zahra Hannan, Leah Daoud, Imani Murdock, Fadelia Deby Subandi, Yasmine Garay, Bonnie Ewart-Fisher

## Social & Emotional Learning in Ghana

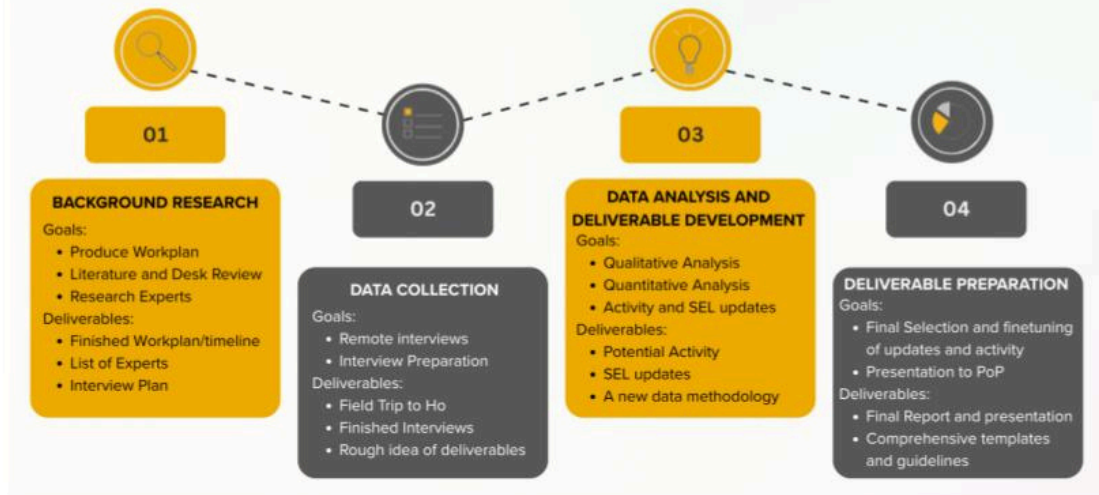
### Overall Insights



Source: Pencils of Promise

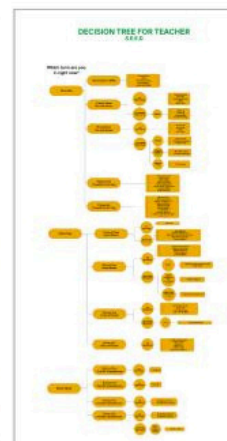
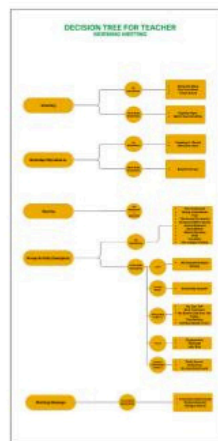
- SEL is largely welcome in Ghanaian schools
  - Integrated into national curriculum
  - Teachers find SEL to be a positive addition to the learning environment
  - Parents and Ghana Education Service find SEL culturally complementary
- Teachers requested additional resources and activities
  - Updates to SEL manual
  - New activity - Field Day
- Some parents were unaware of SEL and Morning Meetings / SEED
  - Parent handout developed
- Progress and successes can be further benchmarked
  - Development of quantitative analysis

## Methodology Overview



## Brief overview of SEL manual updates

- Understanding the Content:**
  - Rearrange the sequence of activities in each step or grade based on the resources required for teachers to prepare (e.g., no resources needed, paper, cards, beads, music playback, audio/video recordings, classroom space)
  - Decision-Tree
- Suggestions for Additional Resources/Content Update for Manuals**
  - Morning Meeting
    - 10 Activities in (Good day! My name is.. & Energizer) requiring audio/video examples
    - 1 activity (Sharing) with additional prompts
  - SEED:
    - More topics for Quiz Show (Term 1 - Primary 4) prompts
    - Thoughts of the day
      - Additional page for pictures in the manual's appendix
      - More female Ghanaian figures - 3 new profiles
- Additional Activities**
  - Solving Problems (Primary 4/5/6) - involving parents
  - Thank You Card



*\*Higher resolution attached in the report*



**Prof. Akua Kuenyehia**



**Efuia Sutherland**



**Adjoa Bayor**

# Field Day Activity

## Event Overview

- A large-scale, competitive field day bringing together students from multiple PoP schools
- Activities to include sports, academic competitions, musical performances, and creative/visual arts showcases
- Top performers earn a prize
- Includes snacks, refreshments, and community celebration

## Purpose & Impact

- Builds excitement and school pride through a signature annual event
- Promotes teamwork, SEL (Social Emotional Learning), sportsmanship, and inter-school camaraderie
- Reinforces positive associations with learning and school culture

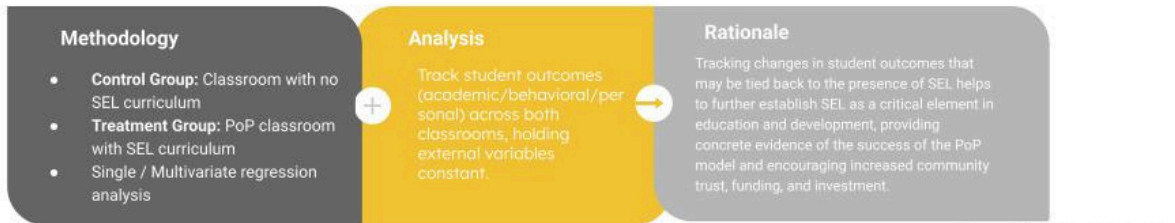
## Funding & Logistics

- Requires 4+ months of planning volunteer teams (PoP staff, **parents**, teachers) at each school to coordinate scheduling and event-day operations
- Planning committees to meet regularly in the months leading up
- Begin budgeting in prior fiscal year; identify potential sponsors early
- Leverage PoP's celebrity network to support sports and visibility



# Description of Quantitative Analysis Proposal

## Quasi-Experimental Study



## Longitudinal Study



## Remaining questions / limitations



- Due to time limits and other constraints, certain areas were not fully addressed in our research, including:
  - Interviews with all identified experts
  - Consistent interview methods
  - Development of a more rigorous quantitative analysis
  - SEL integration across school activities
  - Applicability of U.S. based case studies given cultural context

# Thank You

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# CONCLUSION

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Through the addition of modified SEL guidance for teachers, a future methodology for undertaking quantitative research, a new SEL activity to be integrated in Ghanaian schools, and a handout to better explain Social and Emotional learning to parents, the Capstone Team hopes to support PoP in its goal to provide the most effective integration of SEL ideals in its schools.

Our desktop research, literature review, and interviews with key stakeholders in Ghana and the United States indicates a need for deeper integration of SEL methodology into all subjects and all facets of students' learning experiences. In addition, implementing a new SEL activity that brings local schools together, and by providing an overview of SEL core competencies and aims to parents, the success of SEL in Ghana can be further enhanced.

Throughout this process limitations arose including non-universal interview methods and time limitations. Some interviews with parents and staff on the ground were conducted together with PoP staff, while others were not. Taking into account that there may be discomfort in responding when there are gender imbalances, cultural differences, educational imbalances, power imbalances, and even anxiety over responding in a language different than what is more commonly spoken at home or in a community, there may be some discrepancies between different interviewee's comfort with answering questions fully and freely.

Additionally, as the Capstone Team undertook the project in a shortened timeframe than intended, a quantitative analysis was not able to be conducted and a deeper understanding of some findings was unable to be achieved. However, the Capstone Team hopes that our findings, suggestions, and additions to SEL guidance in Ghana will enable Pencils of Promise to refresh and update their activities to align with the latest developments in the Social and Emotional Learning field.

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# APPENDICES

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## Appendix A. Data Collection Instruments



### Columbia SIPA: Interview Questionnaire for Teachers

Interviewee Name:	
Date:	
Location	
Interviewers:	

1. How do you personally define social-emotional learning (SEL)?
  
2. Were you presented with an opportunity to contribute towards the development of the SEL curriculum / programming that your school uses?
  
3. Do you feel confident implementing SEL in your class? Do you feel you have had enough support to do so?
  
4. Do you have any concerns about SEL curriculum / programming, or is there anything that you feel needs to be changed? If you had concerns at one point and no longer do, what changed your mind?

5. With respect to the Morning Meeting and SEED manual, are there any activities that you have noticed work very well? Are there activities that have not been working well?
  
6. Does SEL result in positive outcomes for every student? Have you noticed that boys and girls have different outcomes, or different ways of responding to SEL? If some students have had challenges with SEL, what alternative methods have you used?
  
7. Have you personally noticed any link between SEL programming and academic improvement in your school?
  
8. Did you have any experience with SEL programming in Ghana when you were in school? How does PoP's SEL programming compare to your experience of Ghana's education system?
  
9. What kind of feedback have you received from parents? Have you ever experienced parents clashing with you, and has it at all made an impact on the student's performance in any way you could see?

Columbia SIPA: Interview Questionnaire for PoP Staff


1. Can you tell us more about your role at PoP (specific job functions, etc)?
  
2. What challenges have you experienced while implementing PoP's SEL curriculum /
  
3. What is your relationship like with schools, especially teachers and other staff?  
Have they ever expressed concerns about SEL curriculum or implementation?
  
4. How do you train new teachers in SEL? Are there any plans to adapt training
  
5. Do you engage with donors in your role? If so, what do you perceive as their priorities? Do they value SEL and academic performance equally?





4. In your experience, what has been the actual outcome of SEL programming at PoP schools? Have you noticed a change in academic performance, public perception of those schools, or anything else?

5. Does the public perceive PoP, especially its SEL curriculum, as authentic Ghanaian programming?

6. What, if anything, would you recommend PoP modify about its curriculum, teacher training, engagement with parents and the broader public, or any other aspect of their work in Ghana?

Do you partner with – or are you aware of – other nonprofit organizations that provide SEL in schools in Ghana?

### Columbia SIPA: Interview Questionnaire for Parents

Interviewee Name:	
Date:	
Location:	
Interviewers:	

1. How many of your children are enrolled in school? How long have they been
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is your level of familiarity with Pencil of Promise's (PoP) SEL curriculum, especially the Morning Meeting and SEED manual?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What impact has SEL programming had on your child / children? This can include, but does not need to be limited to, academic performance or notable social and behavioral differences.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Do you have concerns about SEL programming at your child / children's school?

## Columbia SIPA: Research Participation Consent Form

	Programmatic Design and Implementation of Activities to Support Social and Emotional Learning in Ghana
	Columbia University SIPA Capstone Team, on behalf of Pencils of Promise

### Background

Thank you for considering being a part of our research. We are a team of graduate students from Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs, and we are in Ghana conducting a research project on behalf of Pencils of Promise (PoP). Our study seeks to explore challenges and opportunities in PoP’s Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curricula, analyze recent developments in SEL around the world, and propose recommendations for change – including a new SEL activity to be piloted in Ghana.

After conducting extensive desk research on SEL, including recent developments in the United States and around the world, our next step is to conduct classroom observations in Ghana and interviews with individuals who are experienced in the development and implementation of SEL programming in PoP curricula. We feel very privileged to have been invited to come to Ghana, and to have the opportunity to speak with people such as yourself, who have valuable expertise in the education sector.

### The Interview Process: What to Expect

- We will ask questions about your experience and expertise related to the following topics: the development and implementation of SEL curriculum in Ghana / your school, the impact of SEL on students and the community, the impact of SEL on academic outcomes, and other challenges and opportunities that you face while working in Ghana’s education sector.
- The interview / focus group will take approximately 30 minutes.
- With your consent, we would like to record the interview / focus group and take notes on your responses. All data collected will solely be used for academic and organizational research purposes, and recordings will not be shared without your permission.

We want to stress that your participation is *completely voluntary*. If, at any time, you wish to skip a question or withdraw from the interview / focus group, you are completely free to do so. You will face no consequences, nor will you be asked to justify your reasoning.

### Acknowledgment of Informed Consent

If you wish to proceed, please confirm your agreement by circling an answer to the following questions:

Do you consent to participate in this interview / focus group?	YES / NO
Do you consent to your responses being recorded for research purposes?	YES / NO
Would you like your responses to be kept confidential? <i>If you have any concerns about confidentiality, please speak to a research team member. Potential accommodations may include speaking in a private location or communicating via email instead of in-person.</i>	YES / NO
(Optional) Do you consent to being photographed?	YES / NO

If you, the interviewee, do not wish to continue, the interview will end here. We understand your decision and want to thank you for your time.

However, if you do wish to continue, please fill out the information below.

Full Name:	
Title/Occupation: <i>Please include the amount of time you have been in your current role.</i>	
Signature:	
Date:	

Thank you for your interest in sharing your valuable insights with us! If you have any questions or concerns about this project or your involvement in the research, you are welcome to approach us during our field observation or via the contact information below at any time.

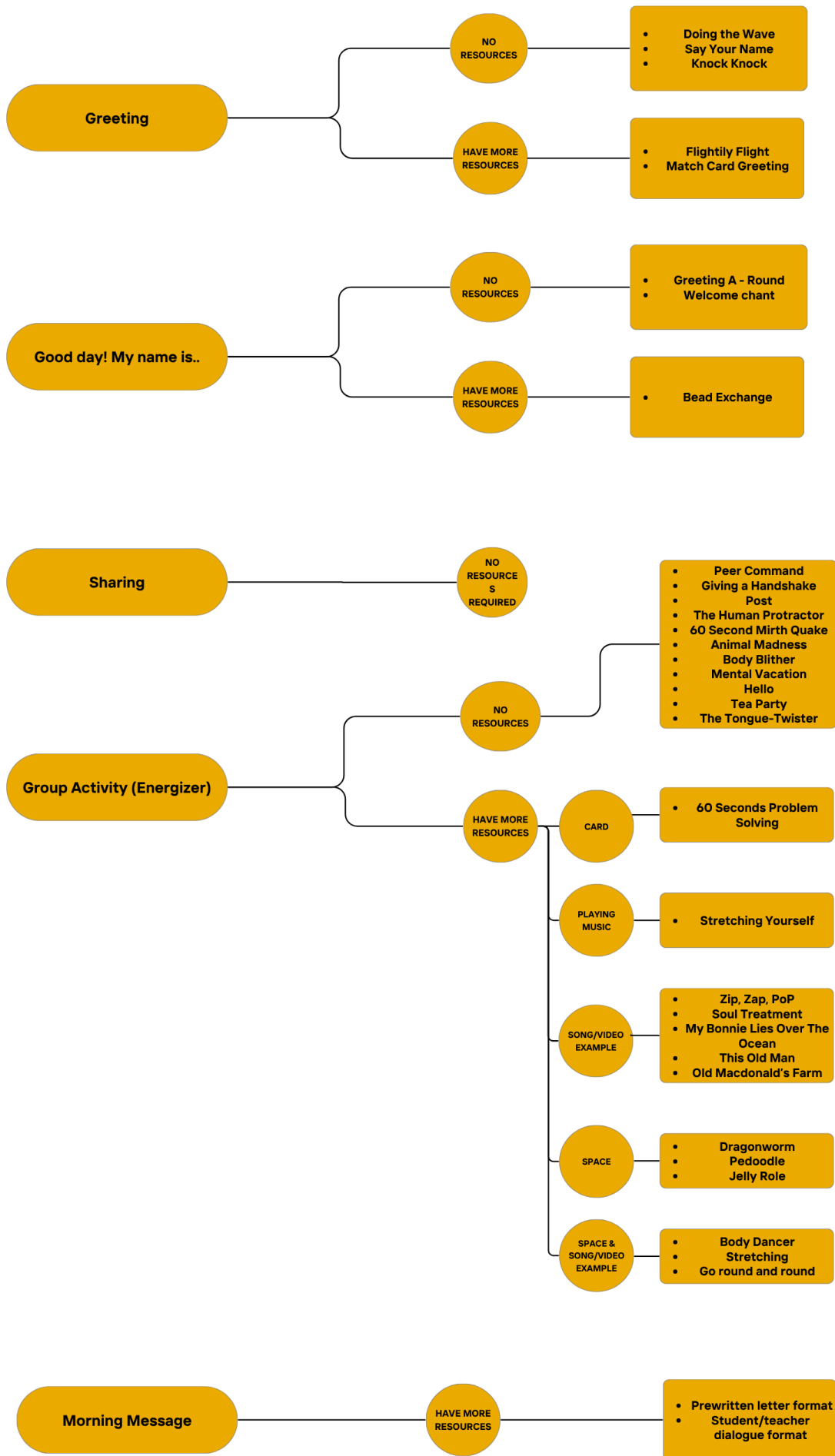
#### Columbia University Research Team | Contact Information

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# Appendix B. Suggested Formatting for Morning Meeting Manual

Component	Activity	Category	Required Resources
<b>Greeting</b>	Doing the Wave	No resource	-
	Say your Name	No resource	-
	Knock Knock	No resource	-
	Flightily Flight	Need resource	Paper airplane
	Match Card Greeting	Need resource	Card with equation
<b>Good day! My name is..</b>	Greeting A - Round	No resource	Song/video example
	Welcome chant	No resource	Song/video example
	Bead Exchange	Need resource	Coloured bead
<b>Sharing</b>	<i>Before sharing begins, the teacher will think of a question or topic to share with the students to address in pairs</i>	No resource	Another list of questions for teachers. See P.31
<b>Group Activity (Energizer)</b>	Peer Command	No resources	-
	Giving a Handshake	No resources	-
	Post	No resources	-
	The Human Protractor	No resources	-
	60 Second Mirth Quake	No resources	-
	Animal Madness	No resources	-
	Body Blither	No resources	-
	Mental Vacation	No resources	-
	Hello	No resources	-
	Tea Party	No resources	-
	The Tongue-Twister	No resources	Additional examples for teachers. See P. 32
	60 Seconds Problem Solving	Need resources	Require card
	Stretching Yourself	Need resources	Require playing music
	Zip, Zap, PoP	Need resources	Song/video example
	Soul Treatment	Need resources	Song/video example
	My Bonnie Lies Over The Ocean	Need resources	Song/video example
	This Old Man	Need resources	Song/video example
	Old Macdonald's Farm	Need resources	Song/video example
	Dragonworm	Need resources	Space
	Pedoodle	Need resources	Space
	Jelly Roll	Need resources	Space
	Body Dancer	Need resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Song/video example</li> <li>• Space</li> </ul>
	Stretching	Need resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Song/video example</li> <li>• Space</li> </ul>
	Go round and round	Need resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Song/video example</li> <li>• Space</li> </ul>
<b>Morning Message</b> <i>*Depends on format</i>	Morning Message Ideas from Mrs. Nelson: Prewritten letter format	Need resources	Chalkboard, chalk, or other format
	Student/teacher dialogue format	Need resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chalkboard, chalk, or other format</li> <li>• Time flexibility</li> </ul>

# Appendix C. Decision Tree for Morning Meeting Manual



# Appendix D. Suggested Formatting for S.E.E.D Manual

SEED Term	Grade	Activity	Category	Required Resources
Term One	Introduction to SEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class Kente</li> <li>• Jobs</li> <li>• Creating a Class Constitution</li> <li>• S.E.E.D. ETHOS</li> </ul>	No resources	
		Staring Contest	No resources	
	Primary Three Fun and Games	Charades	No resources	
		Hide and seek the object	No resources	
		Simon says	No resources	
		Listen up	Need resources	Space (to move around the class for lining up)
		Trust falls	Need resources	Space (On grass)
		Crossing time	Need resources	Space (designated play area, 10 meters away)
		Capture the flag	Need resources	Space (Outdoor) Required object "flag" (can be any object that easily be grabbed)
	Primary Four Fun and Games	The Sponge	No resources	
		1,2,3 Quiet!	No resources	
		I Spy	No resources	
		Quiz Show	No resources	More examples of possible topics See P.33

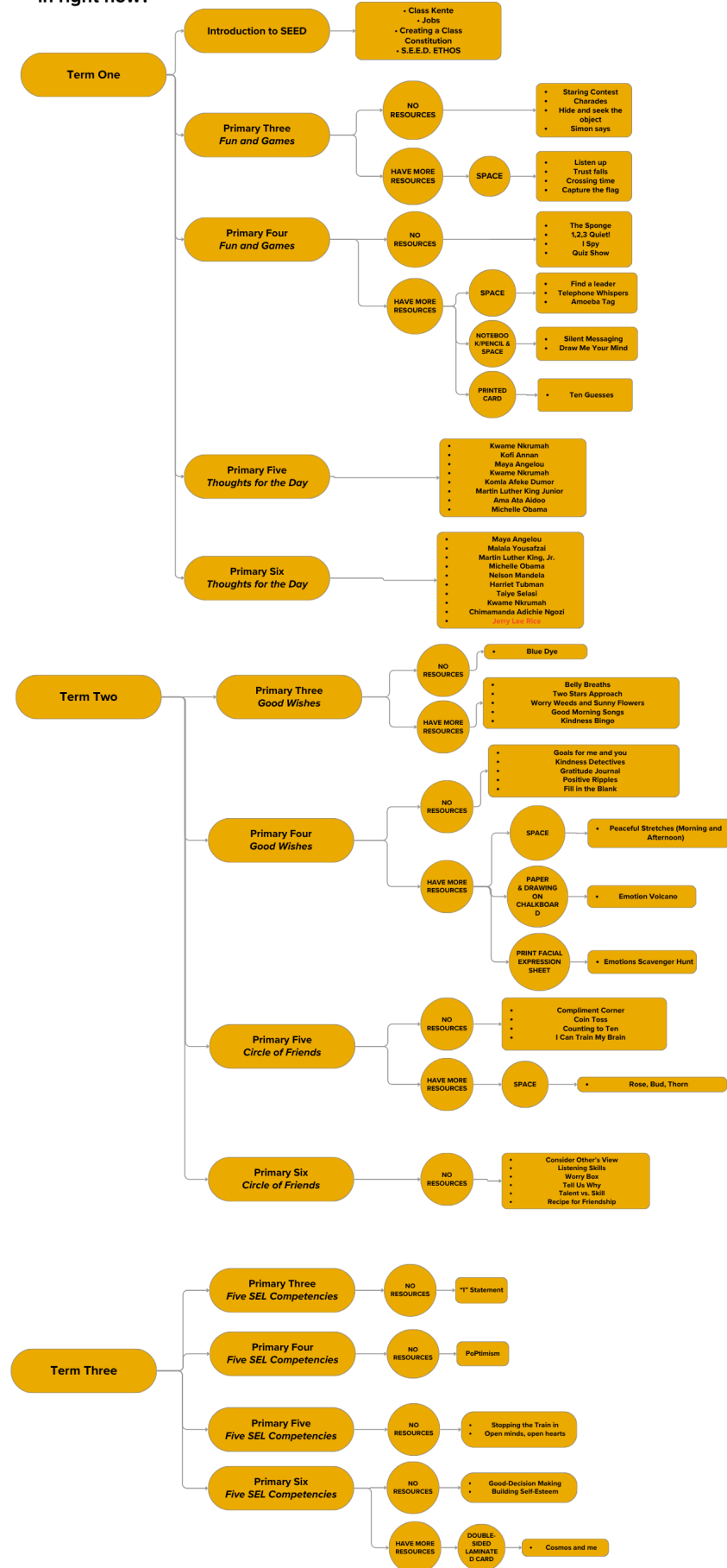
		Find a leader	Need resources	Space (gather in a circle)	
		Telephone Whispers	Need resource	Space (in front of classroom and stand in a circle)	
		Silent Messaging	Need resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require notebook and pencil for students</li> <li>• Space</li> </ul>	
		Draw Me Your Mind	Need resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require paper and pencil</li> <li>• Space (sit in large circle)</li> </ul>	
		Amoeba Tag	Need resources	Space (Outdoor)	
		Ten Guesses	Need resources	Require double-sided laminated card	
	Primary Five Thoughts for the Day	Kwame Nkrumah	Need resources		Based on interviews with teachers, teachers need a larger picture of the figures in the manual / separate to pass around to the students in the classroom  See 3 other examples of female Ghanaian figures in PP 33, 34, 35, & 36.
		Kofi Annan			
		Maya Angelou			
		Kwame Nkrumah			
		Komla Afeke Dumor			
		Martin Luther King Junior			
		Ama Ata Aidoo			
	Michelle Obama				
Primary Six Thoughts for the Day	Maya Angelou	Need resources			
	Malala Yousafzai				
	Martin Luther King, Jr.				

		Michelle Obama			
		Nelson Mandela			
		Harriet Tubman			
		Taiye Selasi			
		Kwame Nkrumah			
		Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi			
		<del>Jerry Lee Rice</del>			
Term Two	Primary Three Good Wishes	Blue Dye	No resources		
		Belly Breaths	Need resources	Space (Stand in a circle), not mandatory	
		Two Stars Approach	Need resources	Require piece of paper	
		Worry Weeds and Sunny Flowers	Need resources	Require paper and pencil for students	
		Good Morning Songs	Need resources	Song/video example	
		Kindness Bingo	Need resources	Require print-out of Kindness Bingo	
	Primary Four Good Wishes	Goals for me and you	No resources		
		Kindness Detectives	No resources		
		Gratitude Journal	No resources		
		Positive Ripples	No resources		
		Fill in the Blank	No resources		
	Term Three		Emotion Volcano	Need resources	Require piece of paper and drawing on chalkboard
			Peaceful Stretches (Morning and Afternoon)	Need resources	Space for the stretches
Emotions Scavenger Hunt			Need resources	Require facial expression sheet	
Primary Five Circle of Friends		Compliment Corner	No resources		
		Coin Toss	No resources		
		Counting to Ten	No resources		
		I Can Train My Brain	No resources		
		Rose, Bud, Thorn	Need resources	Space to form a circle	
Primary Six Circle of Friends		Consider Other's View	No resources		
		Listening Skills	No resources		
		Worry Box	No resources		
		Tell Us Why	No resources		
		Talent vs. Skill	No resources		
		Recipe for Friendship	No resources		
Term Three		Primary Three Five SEL Competencies	"I" Statement	No resources	
	Primary Four Five SEL Competencies	PoPtivism	No resources		

	<b>Primary Five Five SEL Competencies</b>	Stopping the Train in	No resources	
		Open minds, open hearts	No resources	
	<b>Primary Six Five SEL Competencies</b>	Good-Decision Making	No resources	
		Building Self-Esteem	No resources	
		Cosmos and Me	Need resources	Required double-sided laminated card, through explanation, chalkboard and chalk

# Appendix E. Decision Tree for SEED Manual

Which term are you in right now?





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