



Addressing Social, Emotional and Mental Health through the Trauma-Informed Sharpen System.

Background.

The Founder of Sharpen has developed both In-School and an Out-of-School Time (OST) programs for children ages 4 and up. When used following Sharpen’s tiered approach, where faculty and parents receive the same or parallel interventions, these initiatives have shown to improve literacy, critical thinking, decrease disciplinary office visits and improve self-control through mindfulness-based stress reduction exercises. The entire Sharpen system follows CASEL best practices and – at its core – relies on comprehensive coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

One of our most popular interventions is called “5 Minute Mindfulness” – a mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) intervention that has been utilized in multiple settings between 2007 and 2020. Most notably, it was featured as the primary resiliency component for the Resilient Schools initiatives led in the Upstate of South Carolina between 2015-2020.

How We Build Resilience.

Since 2006, the Sharpen team have been collaborating with researchers to build resilience in students, educators and parents alike. We deploy school and community interventions that build comprehensive shared protective factors for suicide, mental health and substance use disorders, school climate, social determinants of health; all of which improve social-emotional and behavioral wellness skills.

Sharpen’s programs focus on the following:

1. Empowering students, educators and parents to co-create more equitable schools and communities, through journalistic style, digital story-telling that enhances critical thinking.
2. We offer students opportunities to use their own voice, examine social problems and co-create change through digitally engaging frameworks and models of resilience and strength. Students are encouraged and empowered to then share their expertise with peers or near-peers.
3. At its core, the Sharpen system is designed to enhance SEL, mental health and behavioral wellness competencies in both educators, parents and students alike. In all cases, we maintain fidelity and best practice with implementation across all tiers of support.
4. Sharpen weaves its program into the daily life of the school so that the conversation around behavioral wellness and resilience is normalized, destigmatized and discreetly accessible.

What Exactly is Sharpen?

[Sharpen](#) is the premiere social, emotional and behavioral wellness solution for your district. The Sharpen system is based on fifteen years of research and professional development. Sharpen has curated all the essential protective factors that ensure your faculty, staff parents and students



have the tools they need to return to the school environment; ready to deal with the stress, anxiety and uncertainty that the past year has caused.

- Sharpen is aligned with CASEL and ASCA and offers tools that are suitable for students ages 4 and up.
- Sharpen engages, empowers and supports individuals, schools and communities by providing access to a vast library of evidence-based and results-proven social, emotional, behavioral and mental health content that assists with overall wellbeing.
- The Sharpen system seamlessly supports prevention and early intervention of treatment across multiple levels of care, so if any of your faculty or staff are struggling, they can be identified early, discreetly connected to care and supported throughout their journey.
- In collaboration with our partners, we can provide mental health screenings, tele-health providers and care coordination for any staff or parent connected to treatment.

As all of us know, it has now been a year since COVID brought our lives to a halt and upended the world we knew in March of 2020. With the pace of vaccinations increasing dramatically and new guidelines from the CDC on distancing, we are all hopeful that schools will soon fully re-open and life can get back to something like “normal”. However, the emotional strain of the past twelve months and the challenges that are yet to come will make that return anything but business as usual for faculty, staff, parents and students.

Why Sharpen – [For Parents](#)

Why Sharpen – [For Counselors](#)

Why Sharpen – [For Superintendents](#)

Why Sharpen – [For Educators](#)

Healthy communities are made up of healthy individuals.

Sharpen provides a cost-effective and flexible system that:

- Provides access to research-based, standards-aligned, and award-winning content for behavioral wellness.
- Builds individual, family and community capacity, competence, and confidence to navigate successfully in these uncertain times and in the future.
- Enhances, extends, and expands the reach of therapists or counselors.
- Connects and coordinates local and regional community resources,
- Provides data to improve resource utilization.
- Builds, supports and activates trauma informed schools through strength-based approach



- Improves resiliency through a validated protective-factor scale to assist with healthy individuals, families, schools and community

Sharpen is a cloud-based, HIPAA and FERPA compliant platform that improves behavioral health outcomes for communities using evidence-based practices. Our company has collaborated with over 200 researchers and clinical experts to create our one-stop behavioral wellness resource.

Standards aligned.

ASCA Alignment.

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Standards identify and prioritize the specific attitudes, knowledge and skills that students should be able to demonstrate as a result of participating in a school counseling program. ASCA National Standards for Students serves as the foundation for The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs. Representing more than 50 years of research, theory and practice, the below ASCA standards align with Sharpen in the personal and social development category, providing the foundation for personal and social growth as students progress through school and into adulthood.

Personal and Social Growth

Standard A: Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

✓	PS:A1 Acquire Self-knowledge
✓	PS:A1.1 Develop positive attitudes toward self as a unique and worthy person
✓	PS:A1.2 Identify values, attitudes and beliefs
✓	PS:A1.3 Learn the goal-setting process
✓	PS:A1.4 Understand change is a part of growth
✓	PS:A1.5 Identify and express feelings
✓	PS:A1.6 Distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior
✓	PS:A1.7 Recognize personal boundaries, rights and privacy needs
✓	PS:A1.8 Understand the need for self-control and how to practice it
	PS:A1.9 Demonstrate cooperative behavior in groups
✓	PS:A1.10 Identify personal strengths and assets
	PS:A1.11 Identify and discuss changing personal and social roles
	PS:A1.12 Identify and recognize changing family roles
✓	PS:A2 Acquire Interpersonal Skills
✓	PS:A2.1 Recognize that everyone has rights and responsibilities
✓	PS:A2.2 Respect alternative points of view
✓	PS:A2.3 Recognize, accept, respect and appreciate individual differences
✓	PS:A2.4 Recognize, accept and appreciate ethnic and cultural diversity
	PS:A2.5 Recognize and respect differences in various family configurations
✓	PS:A2.6 Use effective communications skills
✓	PS:A2.7 Know that communication involves speaking, listening and nonverbal behavior
✓	PS:A2.8 Learn how to make and keep friends



Standard B: Students will make decisions, set goals and take necessary action to achieve goals.

✓	PS:B1 Self-knowledge Application
✓	PS:B1.1 Use a decision-making and problem-solving model
✓	PS:B1.2 Understand consequences of decisions and choices
	PS:B1.3 Identify alternative solutions to a problem
✓	PS:B1.4 Develop effective coping skills for dealing with problems
✓	PS:B1.5 Demonstrate when, where and how to seek help for solving problems and making decisions
✓	PS:B1.6 Know how to apply conflict resolution skills
✓	PS:B1.7 Demonstrate a respect and appreciation for individual and cultural differences
✓	PS:B1.8 Know when peer pressure is influencing a decision
✓	PS:B1.9 Identify long- and short-term goals
✓	PS:B1.10 Identify alternative ways of achieving goals
✓	PS:B1.11 Use persistence and perseverance in acquiring knowledge and skills
✓	PS:B1.12 Develop an action plan to set and achieve realistic goals

Source: American School Counselor Association (2004). ASCA National Standards for Students. Alexandria, VA.



CASEL Alignment.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defined SEL two decades ago and leads the research in best practices.

CASEL'S SEL FRAMEWORK:

What Are the Core Competence Areas and Where Are They Promoted?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all 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.

SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities.



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Learn more: www.casel.org/what-is-SEL



The Sharpen system aligns with CASEL framework across all five SEL categories and includes programming for all circles of influence including: student, classroom, school, family and community. Sharpen’s system can be deployed in the classroom setting or as a peer-resiliency model. The Sharpen system improves the below CASEL competency areas (Bauer et al, 2019; Fadel et al, 2019).

SEL Competency	Sharpen Category / Track	Module Name
Self-Awareness	Cope Improving Coping Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life Skills 101 Why Feelings Are Important
	Nourish Mindful Eating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mindful Eating Through Senses Hunger Cues Fullness Permission Nourishment
	Nourish Building Body Esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ending Shame About Weight Ending Fat Talk Our Bodies Are Our Partner Body Empowerment
	Heal Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharpen Logic Model
	Heal Grit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You Got This Keep On Pushin
Self-Management	Thrive 5 Minute Mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABCs of Mindfulness Delaying Gratification Understanding Mindfulness
	Heal Grit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You Got This Keep on Pushin The Bus
	Thrive Stress Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stress Management 101 Stress and the Nervous System Managing Stress
	Cope Financial Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgeting 101 Credit Health



SEL Competency	Sharpen Category / Track	Module Name
Social Awareness	Thrive Practice Mindfulness (I am Mindful)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stevens Sources of Strength Get in the Cut DJ Moore Circumstances What's Holding You Back?
	Heal Grit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep on Pushin'
	Heal Substance Use Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candace's Story
	Heal PTSD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans and PTSD
	Cope Community Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One on One
	Nourish Building Body Esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ending Shame About Weight
	Nourish Nourishing Through the Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal the Musical We Have Apples Maiya Project
	Relationship Skills	Cope Improving Coping Skills
Nourish Healthy Relationships		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building Blocks for a Healthy Relationship Communicating Through Conflict Tips for Being Assertive Vision Board Activity
Heal Domestic Violence		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warning Signs for IPV
Responsible Decision-Making	Cope Job Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewing Tips Failing Fast
	Cope Find Your Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm Not Ashamed 3 Word Story Speak Out What is Beautiful Real Convo



In addition to the ASCA and CASEL alignment, the Sharpen system follows these best practices through evidence-based programming and frameworks:

Disordered eating and obesity prevention. Through collaborations with over 50 national researchers and clinical practitioners, Sharpen has a library of evidence-based dietetics modules and educational content that has been used as clinical training tools for clinicians at medical schools and in master's level social work and psychology programs.

Trauma-informed. Working in collaboration with more than 15 agencies specializing in childhood trauma and resilience, Sharpen's system includes over 25 courses on childhood trauma, toxic stress, building resiliency and the neuroscience of stress and the brain.

Suicide prevention. Sharpen's co-Founder worked under the leadership at Office of Suicide Prevention for South Carolina Department of Mental Health for over 3 years leading the suicide prevention task force. The models within Sharpen follow the ZERO Suicide framework and feature American Foundation for Suicide Prevention leadership providing an overview of the Living Works and NAMI NH postvention curricula and best practices. Most importantly, the crisis-response system and connection to community organizations built within the Sharpen service increases connectedness and caring contacts as part of the ZERO suicide best practice framework.

Racial Equity. The system includes a series on building compassionate and diverse communities created in collaboration with residents from public housing and members of the police department. For their work developing this modular content over the course of 2 years, the Sharpen co-Founders received the Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Award from the City of Spartanburg in South Carolina.

Substance use prevention. Built in collaboration with a local substance use treatment facility and individuals with lived experience, our team created a series of modules on substance use disorders and finding treatment. In addition, the protective factors within the Sharpen library are known as preventative measures in building resilience against substance use disorders, including opioid use disorders. These include (but are not limited to) early screening and identification; access to information about sexual trauma, assault and adversity; improving healthy coping skills; emotion regulation and self-control; delaying gratification and methods for nourishing the body. The substance use prevention program was delivered through live intervention over the course of several years in South Carolina schools, led by Sharpen CEO in collaboration with The Forrester Center for Behavioral Health in South Carolina.



Additional Reading:

CASEL 2020 Updated Framework and Priorities, 2020.

<https://www.the74million.org/article/niemi-casel-is-updating-the-most-widely-recognized-definition-of-social-emotional-learning-heres-why/>).

CASEL Guide 2013 – Preschool and Elementary Edition: <https://casel.org/preschool-and-elementary-edition-casel-guide/>

CASEL Rating Frameworks: <https://casel.org/rating-frameworks/>

Collaborative Classroom SEL Program:

<https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/programs/caring-school-community/>

Durlak, J., Domitrovitch, C., Weissberg, R., Gullotta, T. (2015). Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning: Research and Practice. Guildford Publications, New York, NY.

Effective SEL Learning Programs: Preschool and Elementary: <https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2013-casel-guide-1.pdf>

National Research Council, Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st Century, Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2012.

Rand: Investing in Evidence-based Social and Emotional Learning:

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2700/RR2739/RAND_RR2739.pdf

School SEL Assessments. <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/tools-assess-sel-in-schools-susanne-a-denham>