

Illinois has had state standards since 2014 and they don't require anything.

Mullen: No, I've actually talked with teachers in Illinois and they haven't really seen much pressure to even look at them.

McKown: Exactly. So in my view, the standards are a conversation piece for educators. Some might say there should be more funding and something behind them to encourage educators to be doing this more vigorously, but I see a lot of growing islands around SEL and I just don't see that people are doing it because they have to or because there's testing pressure, they're doing it because they see the importance of these competencies for their students' success, and their own success as teachers. That's the right motive if you ask me.

Mullen: It really feels like we're on a frontier of SEL in schools where we can make it whatever we want it to be based on the lessons from academic standards in the past.

McKown: Let's hope.

Mullen: I have a tough question and I understand if there's not a good answer for this, but the aspect of the different reporting systems, the self-reporting, the teacher observation, all of these different aspects of SEL assessments - I'm concerned that the teacher observation aspect and the weaknesses inherent in allowing teachers to make their own observations and all the biases that are involved in that, I'm sure. The concern I have is without the teachers understanding how the assessments are developed and the data that's provided filling in between assessment periods with teachers that have not internalized the development of the framework and how those skills are meant to develop in their students, how they are supposed to internalize and infuse that into their classroom management approaches.

McKown: I'll tell you, I think that's a big question and a really important one. To me, it's kind of related to the broader question of how equipped are educators to productive use the SEL assessment data they collect. I think there are very basic questions about whether a school or a district yet have a set of routines and processes for reviewing and reflecting on and making decision on any form of assessment data, reading, math, social-emotional, or whatever, and if they don't it's a pretty heavy lift for them to move from not having any tradition or culture of using assessment data. If they do, it's more feasible to assimilate the SEL assessment data into their ongoing processes. Now the other point that you make that's really important is that SEL is different than reading and math and educators can be reasonable expected to be content area experts in reading and math but maybe not in SEL because its relatively new so I do think that some extra support around what is it, what are we measuring, how are we measuring it, and then how is the data responsibly used to inform instruction, is in most cases needed for schools and districts to I think make the most of their assessment data.

Mullen: I agree with you one-hundred percent. I really appreciate you work with XSel-Labs, the reports you're putting out, the literature you're publishing, is there any place that people I speak

with and people that are listening, any place they can find you and any publications or events that are happening in the future.

McKown: Well they can always go to the website XSel-Labs dot com, and if they click 'Contact Us' and fill out the form, I generally get the emails. So that's an easy way to reach us; or just call us, our phone number's on there, too. Upcoming events, stay tuned, we don't have anything scheduled but we're thinking about hosting some webinars on this very issue of SEL data use because I think it's a really important piece in the field right now, is helping educators wisely consume SEL assessment data to make good and solid decisions based on both the strengths and limitations of whatever assessment they're using. I have a lot of fun giving workshops on this topic and speaking with educators because there is a real hunger to understand how to measure and how to use those measures well. So stay tuned and I'll let you know if we get something on the books soon.

Mullen: Fantastic. Mr. McKown, thank you for taking the time to speak with me.

McKown: My pleasure!

[End Interview]

Hello listeners! If you enjoyed the show, you are encouraged to support the program by going online to Patreon.com/ExploringTheCore - not only can you get early access to each episode, but also bonus episodes, exclusive content, gifts, discounts, and even receive a thank you shout-out personally from me in an episode. And if you haven't already, you can order my book, *Creating a Self-Directed Learning Environment: Standards-Based and Social-Emotional Learning*, available online at Amazon and Corwin.com. Of course, you can learn more about me and my work at www.ExploringTheCore.com. Again, thank you for listening. I'll talk to you next time.