UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

DIPARTIMENTO DI FILOSOFIA, SOCIOLOGIA, PEDAGOGIA E PSICOLOGIA APPLICATA

2025–26 Annual Progress Report

IRN ACTIVITIES, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND FUTURE PLANS

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This report summarizes the activities, accomplishments, and future plans of the World Education Research Association (WERA) International Research Network (IRN), *"Social and Emotional Learning as Foundation for Future Readiness,"* for the 2025-26 reporting period and outlines plans for the year ahead. Following the successful conclusion of the network's initial term (2019-2024), the WERA approved a two-year extension under a renewed focus: the implementation of effective Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) interventions that prepare youth for future readiness and successful work transitions. The full execution of this implementation-science agenda is contingent upon securing external funding. The network has actively pursued funding opportunities to support this work, and while we have not yet secured external support, we remain committed to this priority and will continue to seek it in the coming year. In the interim, the network advanced its mission through its core commitment to capacity building, most notably by mentoring graduate-level researchers to replicate the network's foundational SEL study in a new national context. This effort demonstrates the transferability of the network's collaborative research model and lays the groundwork for a replication framework that will enable additional students and scholars to extend the network's research across diverse settings.

Activities

Pursuit of Funding for the Implementation-Science Agenda

During this reporting period, the convening team prioritized identifying and pursuing external funding to support the network's CFIR-based SEL Readiness Assessment, the design and scope of which are detailed in the network's approved extension proposal. Developing and validating this assessment across the network's participating countries requires dedicated resources for coordinated, cross-national data collection and analysis. The team explored and pursued funding avenues and partnerships capable of sustaining this work. Although external funding has not yet been secured, the network continues to view the implementation-science agenda as a central objective of its current term and will continue to seek the resources necessary to carry it forward.

WORLD EDUCATION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

This work is conducted as part of a larger cross-cultural research program, Social and Emotional Learning as Foundation for Future Readiness, and is formally recognized by the World Education Research Association as an International Research Network (2019–2027).

Mentoring Graduate Students to Replicate the Network's SEL Study

A central activity of this reporting period was the mentorship of graduate level researchers in replicating the network's foundational study of educators' perceptions of the nature and value of SEL. With guidance from network members, Aru Berkimbay adapted the SEL-IRN Educator Survey for use in Kazakhstan and conducted an independent study examining how educators in multilingual settings (Kazakh and Russian) conceptualize SEL and connect it to students' career and workforce development. The mentorship introduced the researcher to the network's collaborative methodology, shared survey instrument, qualitative analytic approach, and standards for culturally responsive research. This activity reflects the network's longstanding commitment to building research capacity among graduate students and early-career scholars, and it served as a pilot for a broader effort to enable others to replicate the network's research model. A second researcher will extend the replication effort to a Chinese context. Although China was among the network's original participating countries, this study acknowledges the considerable regional and cultural variation within the nation, examining how educators' conceptions of SEL differ across settings rather than treating China as a single, uniform context.

Accomplishments

The network's primary accomplishment this year was the completion of a study replicating its foundational SEL research in the Kazakhstani context. Using a modified grounded theory methodology, the study examined how 51 educators in multilingual schools in the Turkestan region of southern Kazakhstan conceptualize SEL, comparing the perspectives of Kazakh-speaking (n = 29) and Russian-speaking (n = 22) educators.

Analysis yielded six interrelated categories, including Teacher-Driven SEL Practices, Self-Regulation, Interpersonal and Social Competencies, Cognitive and Decision-Making Processes, Learning and Engagement Outcomes, and Adaptation and Future Readiness, and a grounded theory model positioning future readiness as the culmination of the SEL developmental process. A notable finding was that educators conceptualized SEL differently across language groups. Kazakh-speaking educators tended to frame SEL as a developmental pathway oriented toward future readiness, career preparation, and personal responsibility, whereas Russian-speaking educators more frequently framed it as an emotional-support system oriented toward well-being, psychological safety, and relationships. Both groups consistently linked SEL to student engagement and academic success. The study offers an important proof of concept that the network's research model can be successfully transferred to, and replicated in, a new national context by an emerging scholar with appropriate mentoring support.

Beyond the replication study, the network's collaborative scholarship continued to reach publication and recognition this year. The network's edited volume, *Social and Emotional Learning as Foundation for Future Readiness: Translating Research to Practice* (Park, Ferrari, Scoda, Karacan Özdemir, Marsay, & Solberg, Eds., 2025, Springer), the culmination of six years of cross-cultural collaboration across nineteen countries, was published and has already drawn

scholarly attention, including a published review in the *Journal of Teacher Education and Lifelong Learning* (Alemdar, 2026) that highlighted the volume's multi-country empirical grounding and its contribution to decentering Western assumptions in SEL research. In addition, a multi-national study of practitioners' perspectives on career decision-making, which draws on the network's cross-cultural SEL data, was published in the *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance* (Kanzaki et al., 2025). A manuscript on developing the STEM career competencies is under review, and the Kazakhstan replication study has been accepted for paper presentation at the 2026 NICE Academy.

Publications and Presentations

Published

Park, C. M., Ferrari, L., Scoda, A.-D., Karacan Özdemir, N., Marsay, G., & Solberg, V. S. H. (Eds.). (2025). *Social and emotional learning as foundation for future readiness: Translating research to practice.* Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-84591-8

Kanzaki, M., Suzuki, H., Abdoulaye, O., Andrei, A., Bacanli, F., Donnelly, H., Ferrari, L., Karacan-Ozdemir, N., Kourmousi, N., Kounenou, K., Marsay, G., Olechowska, A., Park, C., Scoda, A-D., Solberg, V. S. H., Szplit, A., & Zbróg, Z. (2025). Cultural translation of career decision-making: Understanding practitioners' perspectives from a multi-national study on Social and Emotional Learning. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s10775-025-09745-3

Under Review

Karacan-Ozdemir, N., Park, C., & Solberg. V. S. (submitted). STEM career competencies: Scale development, validation, and links to identity, belonging, and interests.

Accepted for Presentation

Berkimbay, A., Park, C., & Solberg, V. S. H. (accepted). Bridging emotional well-being and future readiness: Educators' perspectives on social and emotional learning in Kazakhstan. 2026 Network for Innovation in Career Guidance & Counseling in Europe (NICE Academy).

Review of Network Scholarship

Alemdar, M. (2026). Book review: Social and emotional learning as foundation for future readiness: Translating research to practice. *Journal of Teacher Education and Lifelong Learning, 8*(1), 55–58.

Future Plans

In the year ahead, the network will concentrate on formalizing its replication model and sustaining its pursuit of funding so that its implementation-science agenda can move forward.

- **Develop a replication framework.** Building on this year's mentorship experience, the network's primary goal is to develop a structured replication framework, including a set of protocols, instruments, and analytic guidance, that will enable additional students and scholars to replicate the network's SEL study across new national, cultural, and linguistic

contexts. Formalizing these materials will lower the barrier to participation and expand both the evidence base and the community of contributing researchers.

- **Continue pursuing funding for implementation science.** The network will continue to seek external funding for its CFIR-based SEL Readiness Assessment. Securing these resources remains a central priority and a prerequisite for the cross-national data collection and analysis envisioned for the current term.
- **Continue capacity building and mentorship.** The network will continue mentoring graduate students and early-career researchers, offering structured opportunities for collaborative research, feedback on proposals and manuscripts, and participation in network meetings.
- **Expand participation and dissemination.** As the replication framework matures, the network will invite additional students, scholars, and institutions, particularly from underrepresented regions, to join its work, and it will continue disseminating findings through conferences, webinars, and publications.