STUDENT SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2025-26 RECOMMENDATION

- Create an APS Community of Kindness, highlighting both elements of kindness related to social emotional learning (SEL) and elements of kindness that might not appear as closely related to SEL, using a free, high-quality, ready-to-use kindness curriculum; and

- Launch an executive functioning (EF) skills initiative, much of which clearly can be considered part of SEL and flow from current efforts.

ALIGNMENT TO THE APS STRATEGIC PLAN

The committee recommendation supports the Strategic Plan priorities and performance objectives in multiple areas, such as:

***Student Wellbeing*:**
- School climate and mental health
- Reducing chronic absenteeism and suspensions
- Students feeling safe in schools (including students in vulnerable populations- racially/ethnically diverse, students with disabilities, LGBTQ+, English learners, and other historically marginalized groups)

***Student Academic Growth and Success*:**
- Graduation competencies (College, Career, Civic Readiness Indicators)
- General education access to Students with Disabilities

***Student, Family and Community Partnerships*:**
- Student and family engagement and education
- Equitable family engagement

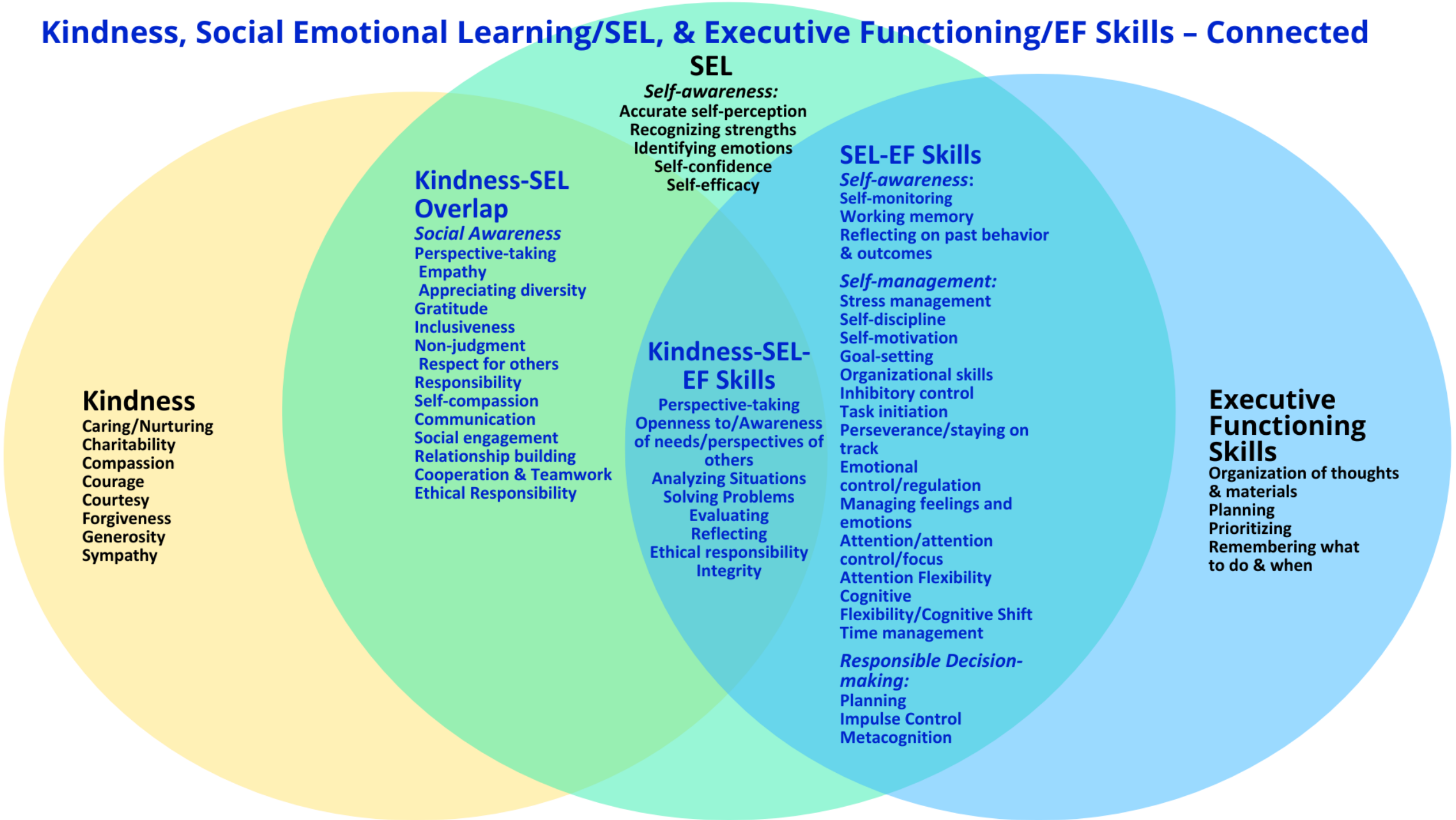
BRAIN SCIENCE/THE SCIENCE OF LEARNING: HOW LEARNING KINDNESS & EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING BENEFITS THE DEVELOPING BRAIN, PRE-K TO 20'S

SEL and EF skill development can support student success by positively impacting brain growth and development. We see these brain preparation and enhancement moves as beneficial *throughout* childhood and teens, for *every* student, and in *every* subject:

- Impacts decision-making, planning, attention and memory.
- Strengthens resilience, cognitive capacity, and adaptability.
- Positively impacts chemicals in the brain that create calmer and happier feelings, leading to less stress.

We believe the committee recommendation will help *every* child to achieve more academic and relationship success while in APS; as well as later in their professional, personal and societal capacities.

Kindness, Social Emotional Learning/SEL, & Executive Functioning/EF Skills – Connected



WHAT WE HOPE STUDENTS & APS WILL SEE FROM ADDING KINDNESS TO SEL

"The ultimate goal of a kindness initiative is to create a safe, comfortable culture and environment for students and teachers alike. By involving students and parents, the likelihood of success increases significantly, and the hope of sustaining kindness over time is a probable outcome." (Why Should My School Have a Kindness Focus? - The Power of Kind). The author continues, outlining the benefits of school-wide kindness initiatives:

- **Improved culture and environment**
- **Reduction in bullying and conflict**
- **Enhanced social and emotional skills**
- **Boost in academic performance**
- **Promotion of inclusion and community**
- **Enhanced mental health and well-being**
- **Strengthened parental/guardian involvement**
- **Long-lasting positive impact**

WHAT WE HOPE STUDENTS & APS WILL SEE AFTER ADDING EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS TO SEL

Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child calls executive functioning skills the brain's "air traffic control system," which, in turn, needs, among other things, supportive relationships and activities, with modeling, engagement, reduction in stress, and fostered social connections. Harvard's In Brief: Executive Function states that, "When children have had opportunities to develop executive function and self-regulation skills successfully, both individuals and society experience lifelong benefits, including school achievements, positive behaviors, good health and successful work."

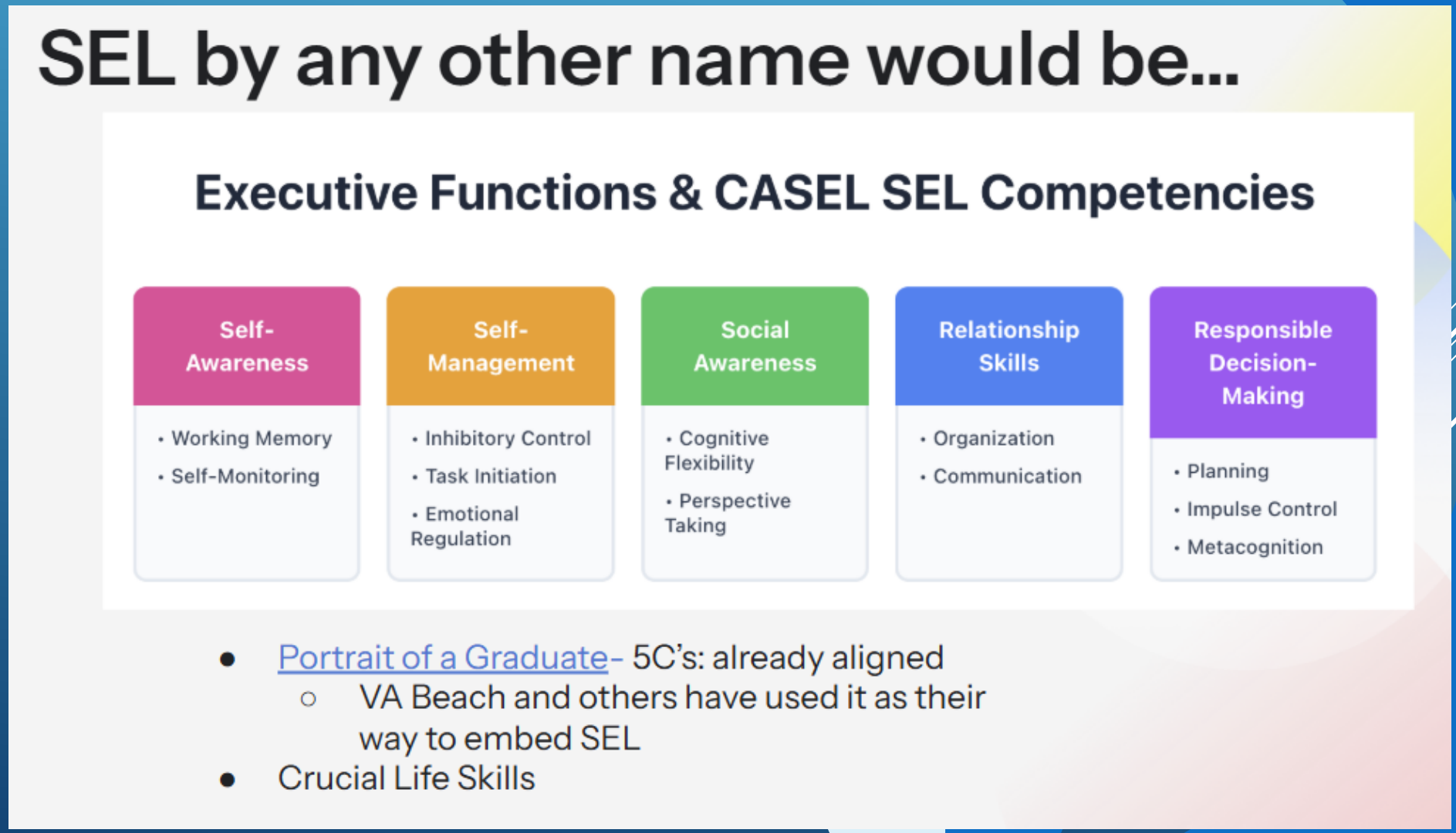
Interestingly, there is no agreement yet in the field on exactly *which* skills are executive functioning skills – but for our purposes, so very many of them apply to school and work, such as self-monitoring, goal setting, organizing work, and time management. Most of these abilities fall under larger umbrellas within SEL, and we appreciate the approach that Mr. Jeffrey Carpenter and Ms. Jennifer Gross are taking, in integrating SEL and EF skills.

EXAMPLES OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS THAT FALL UNDER EXISTING SEL CORE COMPETENCIES

Slide designed and presented by

Ms. Jennifer Gross, Coordinator of SEL

For ACSS October 16 meeting to discuss the committee's recommendation. This slide is part of a 7-slide set prepared by Ms. Gross, and linked in our recommending report.



We wish to thank

The School Board

Dr. Durán

And ACTL and its leadership

For this opportunity to share our recommendations, research, and connection with the community

We Also Extend our Appreciation to:

The following APS Student Services staff members for their help and contributions to this recommendation:

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Ms. Xenia Castaneda, Administrative Specialist, Office of Student Services

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THANK YOU

The Student Services Advisory Committee:

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