

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

School Improvement Goal,

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Social and Emotional Learning

We can all remember childhood moments when we felt particularly safe (or unsafe) in school, when we felt particularly connected to a caring adult (or frighteningly alone), when we felt particularly engaged in meaningful learning (or not). These are the school memories that we all tend to vividly remember: good and/or bad. It is not surprising that these kinds of experiences shape learning and development.

However, school climate is larger than any one person's experience. When people work together, a group process emerges that is bigger than any one person's actions. A comprehensive assessment of school climate includes major spheres of school life such as safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the environment as well as larger organizational patterns (e.g. from fragmented to shared; healthy or unhealthy). How we feel about being in school and these larger group trends shape learning and student development. Peer-reviewed educational research has consistently demonstrated that a positive school climate is associated with academic achievement, effective risk prevention efforts and positive youth development.

Center for Social and Emotional Education
<http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/index.php>

School Goal and Core Competencies

GOAL - "All students are engaged and active learners who are self-aware, caring, respectful, connected to others, responsible decision makers, and academic achievers. Educators, students, families, and community members work together to support the healthy development of all students."

COMPETENCIES –

Self-awareness—accurately assessing one's feelings, interests, values, and strengths; maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence

Self-management—regulating one's emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles; setting and monitoring progress toward personal and academic goals; expressing emotions appropriately

Social awareness—being able to take the perspective of and empathize with others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences; recognizing and using family, school, and community resources

Relationship skills—establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation; resisting inappropriate social pressure; preventing, managing, and resolving interpersonal conflict; seeking help when needed

Responsible decision-making—making decisions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social norms, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions; applying decision-making skills to academic and social situations; contributing to the well-being of one's school and community

Steps Before Implementation

Step 1: Leadership Commits to Schoolwide SEL Initiative. Leadership commitment ensures support for SEL at the highest levels, including systematic sequenced classroom instruction.

Step 2: Principal Engages Key Stakeholders and Creates SEL Steering Committee. The principal shares information about SEL with key school and community stakeholder groups (e.g., teachers, families, student support personnel, support staff, community members) and creates an SEL steering committee, consisting of representatives of some or all of those groups, that is authorized to make decisions.

Step 3: Develop and Articulate Shared Vision. The steering committee, including the principal, creates a vision of student social, emotional, and academic development and shares that vision schoolwide.

Step 4: Conduct a Schoolwide Needs and Resources Assessment. The steering committee, including the principal, conducts a needs and resources assessment of current SEL programs and practices; the policy context both locally and state-wide; student and staff needs; school climate; readiness to implement SEL as a schoolwide priority; and possible barriers to implementation.

Step 5: Develop Action Plan for SEL Implementation. The steering committee, including the principal, develops an action plan based on the results of the needs and resources assessment, which includes goals, benchmarks, and a timeline for SEL implementation, as well as a plan for addressing the six sustainability factors.

Step 6: Review and Select Evidence-Based Program(s)/Strategies. The steering committee, including the principal and key stakeholders, reviews and selects evidence-based SEL program(s)/strategies that meet identified SEL goals.

6 Sustainability Factors

- 1. Provide Ongoing Professional Development.** The principal commits resources for ongoing professional development and provides opportunities for reflection and feedback for all school staff (e.g., teachers, support staff, playground monitors, custodians, etc.). Ongoing professional development and reflection keep SEL instruction and activities fresh and allow for continuous improvement.
- 2. Evaluate Practices and Outcomes for Continuous Improvement.** The steering committee, including the principal, continually monitors the school's SEL practices and outcomes, making appropriate adaptations and improvements. Regular and ongoing evaluation of practices and outcomes helps ensure that the school is reaching its goals and implementing programming as intended.
- 3. Develop Infrastructure to Support SEL Programming.** The school leadership creates an infrastructure, including policies, funding, time, and personnel, to support SEL programming. Establishing an infrastructure for SEL ensures that it remains a visible priority in the school and is therefore more likely to be sustained.
- 4. Integrate SEL Framework and Practices Schoolwide.** The steering committee, including the principal, works with staff to review all school activities to maximize the integration of SEL in the school. Integration of SEL into all school activities provides opportunities for students to practice and reinforce the SEL skills they are learning in the classroom.
- 5. Nurture Partnerships with Families and Communities.** The school leader and steering committee establish school-family-community partnerships that effectively support and integrate students' social, emotional, and academic development. Family and community partnerships can provide financial resources and external expectations to sustain SEL programming, and provide additional support for students to reinforce SEL skills they are learning in school.
- 6. Communicate with the Entire School Community about SEL Programming.** The steering committee, including the principal, regularly shares information about the school's SEL programming and celebrates successes with staff, families, students, and community members.

Implementation

Step 1: Conduct Initial Professional Development Activities.

Trainers from the evidence-based program provide initial professional development, to ensure that initial implementation staff (e.g., administrators and teachers) are grounded in its theory, principles, and strategies.

Step 2: Launch SEL Instruction in Classrooms. Teachers have begun implementing the selected evidence-based SEL program in classrooms and have begun to reflect on the instructional and implementation process. The initial program launch provides an opportunity for staff to become familiar with the program, and reflection prepares staff for schoolwide expansion.

Step 3: Expand Classroom-Based SEL Programming and Integrate SEL Schoolwide. All teachers, after reflecting on initial implementation and making necessary adaptations, have begun implementing the SEL program in their classrooms, and SEL practices are being integrated into other school activities. Integration and expansion create a consistent environment of support for students' social and emotional development.

Step 4: Revisit Implementation Activities and Adjust for Continuous Improvement. The steering committee, including the principal, revisits all SEL planning and implementation activities at bi-weekly intervals to determine if changes or adaptations are needed to improve programming. Regular review of activities and programming is essential to check on progress and ensure timely attention to any problems.



How Will We Know?

Increased State Assessment Test Scores
 Higher Daily Attendance Rate
 Lower Disciplinary Referral frequency
 Greater attendance and participation at non-required school events
 Increased school compliance with NCLB, district, and state student and school goals
 Improvement in School Climate as demonstrated by school climate surveys
 Increased relationships between school and attending families

Resources

2 Day Training Seminar, Chicago. \$500 Per-Team Member, plus travel and per-diem.
 Substitute Costs for teacher team members for training and school planning.
 School-Wide commitment to focus on SEL Program as bulk of school business.
 Continuation of school WEB program
 Continuation of School Cash Program
 Implementation of viable appropriate and valuable programs to reinforce the SEL program as discovered and learned by Committee.

Survey says.....

A 2008 Meta-analysis Survey by Loyola University of 207 implemented programs and 288,000 Urban, Rural, and Suburban students found the following results and impacts of successfully implemented SEL Programs:

- 23% increase in skills**
- 9% improvement in attitudes about self, others, and school**
- 9% improvement in prosocial behavior**
- 9% reduction in problem behaviors**
- 10% reduction in emotional distress**
- 11% increase in standardized achievement test scores (math and reading)**

References

- Center for Social and Emotional Education. <http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/index.php>
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- Zin, J.E., Weisberg, R.P., Wang, M.C. and Walberg, H. (2004) Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning. *Columbia Teachers College*. 191-210.