

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Examples of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Related Work
Special Board Meeting – April 25, 2016

This document highlights a number of examples of work underway at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) that relate to promoting and supporting social emotional learning ; it is intended to provide helpful information but is not a comprehensive and complete list. For more details, please email achievement@doe.mass.edu

The Department is committed to preparing all students for success in the world that awaits them after high school. One of our five core strategies to achieve that goal is *supporting the social, emotional, and health needs of students and families*. As noted in the [Department's Strategic Plan](#) (May 2015), in order to have opportunities to be successful after high school, students need to have healthy social/emotional skills. Furthermore, developing students' social and emotional competencies helps schools create safe learning environments that contribute to academic achievement for all.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) refers to the process by which students develop social-emotional competencies. SEL includes the foundational skills, attitudes, and behaviors that help promote school engagement and academic success. There have been many frameworks developed by organizations such as the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), to articulate the components of SEL. The competencies CASEL identified are as follows:

- *Self-awareness* - identifying and understanding one's own feelings
- *Self-management* - regulating and managing one's own behavior, and setting and achieving goals
- *Social awareness* – empathizing with, and showing concern for others, and respecting diversity
- *Relationship skills* - establishing and maintaining positive relationships with others
- *Responsible decision making* - making constructive and positive choices

Document Contents Include:

- [Wraparound Zone Initiative and the Urban Leaders' Network for School Climate and Student Support](#)
- [Learning Supports and Early Learning](#)
- [Early Literacy](#)
- [Preschool and Kindergarten Standards in the Domains of Social-Emotional Development and Approaches to Learning](#)
- [Bullying Prevention and Intervention and SEL Curriculum Guidelines](#)
- [Charter School Performance Criteria](#)
- [Expanded Learning Time](#)
- [Massachusetts Tiered System of Support \(MTSS\)](#)
- [Educator Effectiveness: Guidebook for Inclusive Practice, and Staff and Student Feedback](#)
- [College and Career Readiness: Individual Learning Plans](#)
- [Early Childhood Special Education Social Emotional Learning Initiative](#)
- [Family, School, and Community Partnership Fundamentals](#)
- [Safe and Supportive Schools Commission](#)
- [Promoting School-Based Adolescent Health](#)

Wraparound Zone Initiative and the Urban Leaders' Network for School Climate and Student Support

Wraparound Zones (WAZ) was a Race to the Top initiative aimed at building district and school capacity to systematically address students' social emotional and academic barriers to learning. The initiative particularly focused on fostering a positive school climate, designing proactive systems to identify and address student needs, developing students' social emotional readiness, and effectively collaborating with families and the community. The American Institute for Research conducted an evaluation of the WAZ initiative and found that it had a positive qualitative and quantitative impact, including statistically significant gains on math and English language arts MCAS scores. The impact was particularly strong for English language learners and students in earlier grades. To document and disseminate learnings and strategies from the initiative, ESE has published a "[Wraparound Zone Replication Cookbook](#)."

To sustain and broaden the impact of the work, ESE has transformed the WAZ peer learning community into an "Urban Leaders' Network for School Climate and Student Support." The group, comprised of district staff overseeing the development and implementation of WAZ-related initiatives in urban and Gateway cities, is currently developing a series of metrics to assess the "conditions for learning" that allow for academic success – including school climate, student support, social emotional learning, academic engagement, and family and community engagement. While this work is still under development, multiple districts have expressed interest in piloting the measures.

Learning Supports and Early Learning

The Office of Learning Supports and Early Learning (OLSEL) developed a [social-emotional learning \(SEL\) statement](#) (document), to define and provide districts, schools, and programs with a better understanding of social-emotional learning and its various elements. Numerous Department grants and initiatives explicitly and intentionally support SEL, including but not limited to [Quality Enhancements in After-School and Out-of-School Time](#) grants that improve the quality of out-of-school time programs and services by supporting partnerships to develop, pilot, and document high-quality service-learning curricula that will help to decrease summer learning loss and *increase students' social-emotional competencies*; [21st Century Community Learning Centers \(CCLC\)](#) programs that support schools, districts and communities in thoughtful design and implementation of additional learning time that meets the specific academic, *social/emotional*, and developmental needs of the students they serve; and [Academic Support Collaborative Partnerships for Student Success](#) grants that engage eligible students in service-learning in order to *support social and emotional competencies* and enhance academic support services so that all students meet and exceed the Competency Determination (CD) standards on their initial taking of the high school English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science and Technology/Engineering MCAS.

Early Literacy

Recognizing the need to address early literacy practices and strategies within the Commonwealth, the Department is developing an Early Literacy and Early Learning Action Plan, and delivery strategy. The plan outlines five goals with concrete objectives, strategies, and measures of success for teachers and students. In addition, the plan recognizes the need for the social-emotional development of each student to ensure a strong student-centered learning environment for literacy acquisition. Students' ability to cooperate and participate in group settings, willingness to try new things and persist when confronted by a challenge, and their ability to communicate emotions are associated with a reduced likelihood of problem behaviors and increased school success. Practices which consider the social-emotional and developmentally appropriate learning needs of each student are woven in to the five goals.

Preschool and Kindergarten Standards in the Domains of Social-Emotional Development and Approaches to Play and Learning

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), in partnership with ESE, contracted with the University of Massachusetts/Boston to create a comprehensive set of preschool and kindergarten standards in the domains of *Social-Emotional Development* and *Approaches to Play and Learning*. These [standards](#) were adopted by the EEC board and are available through ESE as a [resource](#) for districts. The standards were informed by and vetted with local, regional, and state early childhood practitioners; with national researchers including Sharon Lynn Kagan (Teachers College, Columbia University) and Stephanie Jones (Graduate School of Education, Harvard University); and

with the National Governor's Association (NGA) and the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL).

Bullying Prevention and Intervention and SEL Curriculum Guidelines

Included in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention page [resources](#) section is information and materials that may be useful for development and implementation of *social and emotional learning* at the school and district level, including [Guidelines for Implementation of Social and Emotional Learning Curricula K-12](#).

Additionally, in partnership with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Children's Trust is pleased to introduce the Committee for Children's new Second Step Child Protection Unit. The Committee for Children has seamlessly integrated its Talking About Touching sexual abuse prevention and Bullying Prevention curricula into the Second Step Curriculum. Through this integrated approach schools now have a comprehensive resource to help children be safe, supported, and ready to learn.

Charter School Performance Criteria

The Department's application and renewal process and [accountability system](#) for charter schools includes [performance criteria](#) in three guiding areas: academic program success, organizational viability, and faithfulness to charter. Included in this is Criteria 7, Culture and Family Engagement, which sets the expectations that the school supports students' social and emotional health in a safe and respectful learning environment that engages families. The Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign (OCSSR) looks to see how the school creates a safe school environment and addresses the physical, social, emotional, and health needs of its students. The criteria also address how the school develops strong working relationships with families/guardians in order to support students' academic progress and social and emotional well-being.

Additionally, the charter school [newsletter](#) now includes regular updates and resources on social-emotional learning to support this work throughout the field.

Expanded Learning Time

The state funded Expanded Learning Time (ELT) grant is intended to provide additional time for core academics, teacher collaboration and professional development, and enrichment opportunities for students, prioritizing funding to high poverty districts. Schools in this initiative redesign their school days with input from all stakeholders and guided by a set of eight expectations ([ELT Expectations for Implementation](#)). Included in these is Expectation VI: Additional time is used to enhance school culture. Indicators include the reinforcement of positive behavior, a climate of respect, systems and safety nets in place to help all students overcome barriers to learning (both academic and social-emotional), and systems to monitor climate indicators such as attendance and behavior. Enrichment also serves as an important component of this model and, as outlined in Expectation IV: Additional time for enrichment is used to deepen student engagement; indicators consist of providing programming to engage students in learning, student choice, and performance presentations to increase family and community engagement in school.

Massachusetts Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

The [Massachusetts Tiered System of Support \(MTSS\)](#) is a blueprint for school improvement that focuses on system structures and supports across the district, school, and classroom to meet the academic and nonacademic needs of all students. It was developed to help guide the establishment of a system that provides high-quality core educational experiences in a safe and supportive learning environment for all students and targeted interventions/supports for students who experience academic and/or behavioral difficulties and students who have already demonstrated mastery of the concept and skills being taught. The Department continues to provide resources and professional development on MTSS.

Educator Effectiveness: Guidebook for Inclusive Practice and Staff and Student Feedback

Created by Massachusetts educators, this [Guidebook](#) includes tools for districts, schools, and educators that are aligned to the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework and promote evidence-based best practices for inclusion following the principles of Universal Design for Learning, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, and Social and Emotional Learning.

Staff and student feedback are required forms of evidence for use in educator evaluation. The Department developed [model surveys highly aligned](#) to inclusive practice for Districts, schools, or individual educators to adopt or adapt. Some districts chose to focus on student feedback specifically around social and emotional learning.

College and Career Readiness: Individual Learning Plans

The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is a student-directed, dynamic, multi-year planning tool designed to increase students' understanding of the connections and relevance of what they do now to their future success. The ILP maps academic plans, personal/social growth, and career development activities while taking into account the student's unique, self-defined interests, needs, and goals for the attainment of post-secondary success. While ILP implementation is not required in Massachusetts, an increasing number of schools and districts across the Commonwealth are implementing ILPs to support students. To further assist districts, the Office of College and Career Readiness created guidance for the implementation of [Individual Learning Plans](#).

Early Childhood Special Education Social Emotional Learning Initiative

The Department's Early Childhood Special Education Strategic Plan and Special Education Improvement Plan focuses on assisting districts to support social-emotional learning (SEL) through integration of preschool and school-age evidence-based practices that promote social emotional development in a tiered framework called the Pyramid Model. This Pyramid Model represents a tiered intervention system for supporting improved social emotional outcomes in young children with a focus on those at-risk or with disabilities. [The Center for the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning \(CSEFEL\)](#) and [Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention \(TACSEI\)](#) provides technical assistance, training materials, videos, and print resources for local leadership teams which work to guide classroom and school-based implementation of the Pyramid Model. A parent training series, the Positive Solutions Model, is also part of this framework. The Pyramid Model encourages data-based decision-making to guide implementation efforts, monitor outcomes, and adjust the program through the cycle of inquiry.

Family, School, and Community Partnership Fundamentals

[The Massachusetts Family, School, and Community Partnership Fundamentals \(Fundamentals\)](#) are the result of a multi-year collaborative process in defining guidelines and research-based practices for the engagement of families, schools, and communities in supporting equitable learning opportunities for students. This initiative was coordinated by the Parent and Community Education and Involvement (PCEI) Advisory Council of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Board (Board). The fundamentals serve as a new tool to support high expectations for family, school, and community partnerships.

Safe and Supportive Schools Commission

The [Safe and Supportive Schools Commission](#) was established through Chapter 284 of the Acts of 2014 and is in its second year of work. Current Commission work includes a focus on investigating ways to improve, update, and refine the [Behavioral Health and Public Schools Framework and Self-Assessment Tool for Schools](#); ways the state and communities can better align, integrate, and streamline initiatives; gathering information to inform recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on a number of aspects of work related to safe and supportive schools; and ways funding sources can be leveraged to support this work at the local and state level. *Social emotional learning* is a key component of [safe and supportive schools](#).

Promoting School-Based Adolescent Health

The Departments' Centers for Disease Control (CDC) cooperative agreement to promote school based adolescent health funds training and technical assistance; surveillance; and policy monitoring and implementation assistance, to help districts improve policies and procedures in support of [Safe and Supportive Environment for All Students and Staff](#).