The Mansfield Public Schools Approach to Social Emotional Learning

MANSFIELD
C O N N E C T I C U T
Public Schools

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The Mansfield Social Emotional Learning Task Force

Mansfield Public Schools
Social Emotional Learning

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement

This document was developed through the commitment and hard work of the SEL Task Force members. Members include: Peter Dart - Principal Goodwin, Abby Forsyth - 3rd Grade Teacher Goodwin, Mary Lee Geary - 3rd Grade Teacher Goodwin, Katharine Grottke - School Psychologist MMS, Roseann Holden - School Psychologist Goodwin, Kaye Jakan - Literacy Consultant, Alissa Mahoney -School Psychologist Southeast, Eileen Melody - School Counselor MMS, Jennifer O'Brien - 6th Grade Teacher MMS, Carly Paine - Math/Science Consultant, Shamim Patwa - Director of Student Support Services (Chair), Elyse Poller - 8th Grade Teacher MMS, Lauren Rodriguez-Principal Southeast, Mike Seal-Principal Vinton, Brandi Simonsen - Parent, Kate Smallidge - Music Teacher Southeast, Chris Toomey - Kindergarten Teacher Goodwin, Sarah Woulfin - Parent, Barbara Yeager - School Psychologist Vinton

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Task Force Mission Statement

The SEL Task Force of district educators and parents is charged with keeping SEL at the forefront of our district educational mission, the daily work of educators, and the overall experiences of staff, students and families. The task force recognizes that social justice and equity are interwoven within the framework of social emotional learning.

The task force will define ways to bring equity and voice to marginalized groups by identifying obstacles and working together with all school staff and families to find solutions. The task force also serves to help understand the social emotional needs of our students, families, and staff populations and develop a multi-tiered system of support to develop competencies among all students. This effort includes identifying and providing resources, professional development, interventions, and advocate for systemic changes that can best meet shifting needs.

Background

The SEL Task Force was formed in the fall of 2018. The task force members represented teachers, school counselors, school psychologists, parents, and administrators from across the district. The task force was initially charged with developing a working definition of SEL and conducting a needs assessment.

Based on the needs assessment, it was clear that all teachers engaged in some type of social emotional skill development within their classroom. All schools in the district allotted instructional time to developing social emotional skills. Multiple programs and resources were used to support this work. It was also evident that there was a lack of common language across the district with respect to social emotional learning. Articulation from the elementary level to the middle school level to discuss the development of these skills was also absent.

A survey was administered to teachers in the fall of 2019. Teachers across the district recognized the importance of SEL and expressed the need for a unified understanding of SEL. Teachers placed a priority on professional development to further strengthen their skills in order to better address the increasing level of student needs. Several key areas were noted within the survey. Specifically, teachers wanted more support to address students' ability to deal with stress, cope with anger, self-regulate emotions, reduce anxiety, and develop a stronger sense of personal responsibility. Other areas of interest included understanding trauma, developing students' perseverance/grit, and opportunities for teachers to collaborate with others.

The task force extensively reviewed existing frameworks and research in order to shape Mansfield's own definition of SEL and framework for approaching social emotional learning. Of the many models that helped inform our working definition of social emotional learning, task force members selected the Wallace/Harvard framework for its integration of executive functioning skills, social skills and emotional regulation.

District Guiding Principles (District Expectations)

The Mansfield Public Schools is committed to creating an environment that promotes social, emotional, behavioral, and character skill development. In ensuring this vision, the SEL Task Force identified the following guiding principles:

- Social emotional learning occurs in supportive, restorative, positive environments that devote time for teaching, re-teaching, and building skills
- SEL skills will be explicitly taught at all grade levels and incorporated throughout the day
- SEL skills will be developmentally appropriate and responsive to the needs of the student and content
- Equity and Anti-Racism are core to the development of social emotional learning
- Each school will identify prosocial norms that are modeled, taught, and prompted by adults
- Staff will receive ongoing professional development to develop social and emotional competence
- Educators will strengthen family-school-community partnerships to promote the development of social emotional learning for all children

Definition of SEL

Social Emotional Learning is a process through which individuals learn and apply a set of social, emotional, behavioral, and character skills that supports individual well being and fosters a spirit of community.

Framework Domains (based on the Wallace Foundation/Harvard Model)

Cognitive Regulation

Cognitive Regulation (Executive Functioning) - basic cognitive skills required to direct behavior toward the attainment of a goal *The nature of these skills will vary based on cultural, developmental and environmental factors.			
Attention Control	The ability to attend to information and goal-directed tasks while resisting distractions and shifting tasks when necessary.	Example: Listening to the teacher and ignoring other kids walking in the hallway.	Lessons/Resources: Attention Control, Prek-4 Grades 5-8: *EF in the Classroom - Attention Control

Inhibitory Control	The ability to suppress or modify a behavioral response in service of attaining a longer-term goal by inhibiting automatic reactions while initiating controlled responses appropriate to the situation.	Example: Controlling the urge to shout out and remembering to raise one's hand.	Lessons/Resources: Inhibitory Control, Prek-4 Grades 5-8: *EF in the Classroom - Response Inhibition
Working Memory/Planning Skills	The ability to cognitively maintain and manipulate information over a relatively short period of time, and planning skills are used to identify and organize the steps or sequence of events needed to complete an activity and achieve a desired goal.	Example: Following a series of instructions, mapping out a plan for completing a project	Lessons/Resources: Working Memory/Planning Prek-4 Grades 5-8: *EF in the Classroom - Working Memory *EF in the Classroom - Planning *EF in the Classroom - Goal Directed Persistence
Cognitive Flexibility (*Anti-Racism/ Equity)	The ability to switch between thinking about two different concepts to thinking about multiple concepts simultaneously, or to redirect one's attention away from salient objects, instruction, or strategy to another.	Example: Changing your plan as you incorporate peer feedback about your work	Lessons/Resources: Cognitive Flexibility, Prek-4 *EF in the Classroom - Cognitive Flexibility

Emotional Processes

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="4">Emotional Processes - a set of skills and understanding that help children recognize, express, and regulate their emotions as well as engage in perspective-taking around the emotions of others *The nature of these skills will vary based on cultural, developmental and environmental factors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotion Knowledge/ Expression</td>
<td>The ability to recognize, understand, and label emotions in oneself and others (emotion knowledge) and to express one's feelings in contextually appropriate ways (emotion expression).</td>
<td>Example: Being able to identify that you are frustrated and then choosing to express your frustration by using appropriate language.</td>
<td>Lessons/Resources: Emotion Knowledge/Expression, Prek-4

Grades 5-8:
What Makes Me Anxious
Worry Bag Activity
Degrees of Emotions
Feelings and Emotions Worksheets
Feelings and Situations
Feelings Board Game</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotion and Behavior Regulation</td>
<td>The ability to use effortful control strategies to modify the intensity or duration of emotional arousal, both positive and negative (emotion regulation) as well as the ability to learn and conform to expectations for appropriate social behavior (behavioral regulation).</td>
<td>Example: Taking deep breaths to calm oneself after feelings of anger.</td>
<td>Lessons/Resources: Emotion and Behavior Regulation Prek-4

Grades 5-8:
MS Lessons/Resources

EF in the Classroom - Emotional Control</td>
</tr>
</table>

| Empathy and Perspective - Taking (*Anti-Racism/ Equity) | The ability to understand another person's emotional state and point of view. This includes identifying, acting upon the experiences, feelings, and viewpoints of others, whether by placing oneself in another's situation or through the vicarious experiencing of another's emotions. | Example: Understanding the experiences of a classmate of color and recognizing that one's comments can bring pain to that classmate. | Lessons/Resources: Empathy, Prek-4

Grades 5-8 MS Lessons/Resources |

Social/Interpersonal Skills

Social/Interpersonal Skills -allow for accurately interpreting other people's behavior, effectively navigate social situations, and interact positively with peers and adults *The nature of these skills will vary based on cultural, developmental and environmental factors.			
Understanding Social Cues	The process through which children interpret cues from their social environment and use them to understand the behavior of others.	Example: Noticing someone else's face and body language when you are interacting with them and changing your behavior accordingly	Lessons/Resources Grades Prek-4: Social Cues, Prek-4 Grades 5-8: Social Cues:
Conflict Resolution/ Social Problem-Solving (*Anti-Racism/ Equity)	The ability to generate and act on effective strategies or solutions for challenging interpersonal situations and conflicts.	Example: Using restorative practices to resolve a conflict	Lessons/Resources Grades Prek-4: Conflict Resolution, Prek-4 Grades 5-8: Conflict Resolution Skills:

Prosocial Skills	The skills required to organize and navigate social relationships, including the ability to interact effectively with others and develop positive relationships. Includes a broad range of skills and behaviors.	Example: Listening, communication, cooperation, helping community-building, and being a good friend.	Lessons/Resources Grades Prek-4: *Prosocial Skills Prek-4* Grades 5-8: *Prosocial Skill Lesson*

The Importance of Trauma Informed Practices

Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being.

- ○ Quick Guide: Trauma Symptoms, Monitoring Well-being, Easy Implementation SEL Practices
- ○ Prek-4 Resources for Trauma Informed Practices
- ○ Middle School Page Resources/Lessons
- ○ Trauma Responsive Educational Practices (free training)

Integrating the 5Cs' and the SEL Framework

Integrating the 5Cs' with Framework

Assessing Needs within a Multi-tiered System of Supports

Implementation of social emotional learning practices begins with understanding the needs within one's environment. To that end, data is used to inform and identify areas to be prioritized. "Easy data" collection practices include tools such as Direct Behavior Ratings (DBR), exit or entrance tickets, staff reports, and student self-report. More comprehensive assessment can include the following: low work completion, office discipline referrals, attendance, nurse visits, and surveys. The same data collection methods can be used to provide progress monitoring as well as provide opportunity for program evaluation. The key steps to remember are to screen, support, teach, monitor.

School based CARE teams will be tasked with reviewing data to identify students who require increasing levels of support.

Instructional Practices for Developing SEL Skills

Adult skill professional development is viewed within the context of five phases. The development and work of the SEL Task Force comprised much of the focus of Phase 1. A district definition of SEL and related framework were outcomes of this phase. Much of Phase 2 is devoted to developing educators' social and emotional competence. Essential to this is the need for educators to learn about oneself by understanding one's own perspective and how this perspective influences one's work. Key to this is understanding the role of race, gender, sexual orientation, culture and trauma in shaping our environment. The work expands to developing safe, equitable, and inclusive learning environments as part of Phase 3.

As one of our guiding principles suggests, social emotional learning occurs in positive, supportive environments where adults model the behaviors we seek to develop in our students. Translating these skills into the classroom and school community is the ongoing work of Phase 4. Expanding the social emotional learning beyond the school and into the community with a goal of making lasting systemic change is the final, and continual focus, of Phase 5.

Student Learning and Skill Development

Suggested SEL Instructional Practices		
Discussion	Explicit Instruction	Scaffolding Skills
Vocabulary Development	Handouts/Tools/Visual Displays:visual aids, setting up a problem box, planning templates	Art
Games Great Games for Morning Meeting	Kinesthetic: fidget tools,movement breaks, sand, playdough, stress ball	Daily check-in with staff member
Songs 10 Songs to Explore Emotions	Skill Practice	Role Play Problem Solving Cards
Videos: Zen Den and Cosmic Kids , PBS, Sesame Street and Daniel Tiger, COVID- Stay Safe and Be Kind, Minions		
Books/Stories: Funny Picture Books, Books for Kids Who Worry, Diverse Picture Books, Diversity Series 18 Books (asian-pacific-islander-and-asian-american,		

Poetry, Visualization, Meditation: Zen Den and Cosmic Kids ,progressive relaxation, Belly Breaths, Sesame Street, Go Noodle, Mind Yeti
Team building activities: Team Building Activities , Team Building for Big Kids,, Team Building Games
SEL Programs/Approaches: Responsive Classroom, Second Step (Second Step Lessons by Skill Area), Zones of Regulation, Peace-making Skills for Little Kids, I Can Problem Solve, Incredible Years Curriculum, Social Decision-Making Problem Solving Program, RULER, Social Thinking, PATHS - Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies, Choose Love Movement Back to School Support, PBIS

References

Berger, R., Berman, S., Garcia, J., Deasy, J. (2019). A practice agenda in support of how learning happens. The Aspen Institute - National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development.

CSDE (2018). Components of social, emotional, and intellectual habits: Kindergarten through grade 3.

Hanover Research - WASA School Information and Research Service (2019). Best practices in social-emotional learning.

Kendziora, K. & Yoder, N. (2016). When districts support and integrate social and emotional learning (SEL): Findings from an ongoing evaluation of district wide implementation of SEL. Education Policy Center at American Institutes for Research.

SEL Reopening Committee 2020

Wallace Foundation-Harvard Graduate School of Education (2017). Navigating SEL from the inside out.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2018). Social and emotional learning competencies.

Resources

CT Resources to Support Student Learning During School Closures Due to COVID19 Vol2

Distance Learning SEL Daily Check-In

National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement - Trauma - Informed Family and Community Engagement

Reading Rockets resources

SEL Booklist

Social Emotional Family Resources

Trauma Responsive Educational Practices (free training)