

Social Emotional Learning: Executive Summary

“Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”
(CASEL, 2016)

Skills That Matter

Self-Awareness:

The ability to accurately recognize one’s emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one’s strengths and areas for growth and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

Self-Management :

The ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.

Social Awareness:

The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

Relationship Skills:

The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.

Responsible Decision Making :

The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions and the wellbeing of self and others .

CASEL (2016)

The Need

At MPS our goal is to ensure that every student is ready to actively engage and succeed in their college, career and life experiences. Policy makers, educators, and the public agree that SEL is a critical catalyst to reaching this goal.

Benefits of SEL:



Comprehensive Implementation

To ensure each of the comprehensive implementation aligned to researched best-practices we must focus on reaching the whole school, the whole child, the whole day. That is, it is imperative for SEL frameworks to have a strong direct instruction component, embed SEL content throughout all academic content areas, and focus on building a safe and engaging school climate. As the district works to promote SEL in each of these three areas, it will be crucial to monitor student and system-level progress.

SEL Standards

Over last decade, research and policy experts have made advancements in implementing SEL standards. CASEL has worked with a number of states and districts to establish these standards. They cite the following considerations as essential to support maximum impact of District and State SEL standards :

1. **Free standing and comprehensive standards** establish SEL as a clear priority. Standards must include **developmental benchmarks**.
2. SEL standards should be **integrated into other subject areas**.
3. Standards that provide **guidance on how adults can support students** through teaching practices are more effective.
4. Standards should provide guidance on how to build and sustain overall **school climate**.
5. Standards should provide guidance on how to make instruction **culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate**.
6. Standards that **provide tools that support high quality implementation** are more likely to have a positive impact.

Recommendations

The following recommendations come from reviewing the literature, mapping out the current state of SEL in MPS aligned to researched best practices and conducting a needs assessment.

School Level

Prioritize direct instruction

- Each pk-8 site should implement a district supported scoped and sequenced SEL curriculum with fidelity. Sites need to budget time and resources for necessary pd for any district supported curriculum (2 hours).
- Sites should be able to request to use supplemental curriculum once they reach fidelity of implementation with primary tool and additional student need is documented.

Work on embedding content

- Grade level teams along with specialists and behavior deans should meet to identify opportunities to consistently embed and integrate SEL practices throughout the school day including non-classroom spaces and activities.
- Teachers should identify how they will embed SEL in academic content in lesson plans as well as classroom engagement plans.

Build a Positive School Climate

- Capitalize on morning meeting/ advisory to build classroom community and school wide engagement.
- Display materials throughout the school that reinforce SEL.
- Use PSWE plans to communicate standards for adults to use the same language and practices in SEL. Work to develop building wide understanding and buy-in of PSWE plan.
- Connect with site specific OST programming to promote consistent practices across settings
- Engage parents, community members and any site specific community partners to build understanding of what SEL in Minneapolis is broadly but also at a site specific level. This should happen through multiple modes such as both open house events, teacher conferences and print materials .
- Insure and track skill-based supports for all behavior referrals
- Recognize that successful implementation of SEL requires direct instruction, embedding content and school climate

District Level

Secure resources to

- Complete needs assessment on second step implementation including materials, training and fidelity of practice.
- Create a sustainable train-the-trainer model for direct instruction curriculum.
- Explore and adopt high school direct instruction curriculum and materials that promote cross content embedding.
- Hire a district facilitator to lead the secondary work including integrating SEL in advisory.

Continue deliberate collaboration

- Work to build active collaboration with all internal and external partners.
- Work with Teaching and Learning to embed SEL throughout core content. In this work, prioritize the intersection of SEL with the literacy adoption as well as health/physical education and fine arts.
- Work with the PSWE team to ensure SEL components in and school-wide and classroom engagement plans are completed. Additionally coordinate and monitor SEL components in the OCR agreement.
- Partner with state and national experts on development of recommended SEL standards and ESSA requirements.
- Develop a plan to deliberately communicate about MPS SEL practices.
- Develop improved PD offerings.

Focus on Measurement

- Develop an evaluation plan to measure system readiness and progress. Analyze data from behavior referrals to look at the use of skill based supports for all infractions.
- Prior to implementation, fully research, vet, pilot and evaluate all measures to see if they are scientifically sound, strengths-based and culturally appropriate. Additionally, develop plan for how to use data without furthering bias.
- Until measures are appropriately evaluated, delay adoption of new Universal SEL screener. During the interim, use behavior screener and current practices that system has already developed and trained on including level 1 and 2 behaviors and out of class referrals, and progress report data to inform MTSS/ RTI.
- Update teacher evaluation practices to reflect and align to current SEL Framework .