

Social and Emotional Learning Initiative
Update for School, March 22, 2016

Implementing a comprehensive social and emotional learning (SEL) framework is our Strategic Plan focus for this year, and will continue to be a focus for at least the next two years. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning defines SEL as:

Social and 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. (<http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/>)

These can be grouped into five core competencies:

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision making

With generous funding from the Foundation for Belmont Education, we are working with a skilled expert in the field of SEL, Rachel Poliner, who is helping us understand and define how SEL is implemented in “layers” to provide the maximum benefit of instruction and practice for all students. These include:

- Classroom practices
- Schoolwide practices and structures
- Direct Instruction (Open Circle and Second Step at the elementary schools, instruction during health and wellness classes at middle and high schools)
- Infusion into the content
- Events
- Family engagement

By the end of this year, our goal is for this year is to increase the awareness and understanding of SEL competencies among all the educators and staff in the buildings as we work to increase the opportunities for students to learn and practice these skills. Now that we have passed the midpoint of our school year, I'd like to share an update on the work going on in each school and at the district level.

- Seventy educators are members of their School SEL Steering Committee, and they
 - attended 1- or 2-day SEL institutes to increase their knowledge and skills,
 - designed and led professional development for all staff on September 30, 2015, and

- continue to increase SEL knowledge among their colleagues through staff newsletters, faculty meetings, and other professional development opportunities
- Twenty of those educators are also members of the Districtwide SEL Steering Committee, and they
 - continue to learn from our consultant,
 - share the work happening in the schools,
 - are considering standards to define what the competencies look like at each grade span, and
 - will develop online resources and information about SEL.
- Eighteen Professional Learning Teams have made SEL the focus of their work this year (out of a total of 57 PLTs). Some of the topics include:
 - Mindfulness and music education
 - Second Step
 - SEL in the foreign language classroom
 - Mindset and the components of effective effort
- We held three SEL Presentations for parents and guardians in January and February. More than 120 people attended these presentations, which included information both information about what's happening in the schools as well as what parents can do at home.

We are working with our consultant to plan the SEL focus areas for 2016-17, including plans for SEL institutes for Leadership Council and our Steering Committee members in late June.