Strengthening Social and Emotional Skills during COVID-19: Addressing Problems of Practice
Who We Are
Today’s Speakers

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Overview of Today’s Webinar

1. Framing on promoting students’ social and emotional skills to address stress, anxiety, and isolation they may be experiencing relating to COVID-19

2. Brief expert presentations on addressing challenges relating to implementing SEL programs and practices

3. Small group discussions on strategies for addressing problems of practice

Resource inventory will be sent out after the event!
DESE’s SEL and Mental Health Support

1. Bolstering Tier 1 Supports for all Students, Staff and Families
   • Engaging families
   • Supporting staff
   • Re-envisioning School Culture
   • Strengthening Key Social Emotional Skills and Mindsets
   • Cultivating Positive Behaviors

2. Preparing to Address Increased Tier 2 & 3 Needs

3. Mobilizing Around this Work

https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/mental-health/positive-learning-environments.docx
Using a Multi-Tiered Approach

https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/mtss/blueprint.pdf
Discussion: Why SEL Now?

What are some reasons to focus on SEL now, in midst of the current context?
Discussion: Why SEL Now?

Anxieties related to COVID-19 and its consequences
  Focus on structural racism is impacting Black and Brown students

Transitions from traditional learning to current and evolving models
  Social distancing is impacting students’ relationships

Students are being asked to be more self-directed and motivated
  Students and adults struggling with less structure and routine
Three Problems of Practice

➢ Adapting SEL to remote learning or hybrid models

➢ Culturally-responsive SEL programs and practices

➢ Integrating SEL into academic instruction
Adapting SEL to remote and hybrid learning models
Problem(s) of Practice

“For the past few years, my school has had a strong set of Tier 1 practices, but now that we’re learning virtually some of the time, it feels like we’re starting over!”

“Students, staff, and families are struggling this year with lots of stress and uncertainty, so we want to focus on SEL. How do we start, given that we’re not teaching fully in person right now?”

“Students in hybrid models are asked to make many transitions; this makes their schedules harder to follow and more complicated. How can we support them?”
Adapting SEL across models:

- Help students feel seen, heard, and empowered.
- Check with your SEL curricula providers to see if there are virtual lessons, modules, or adaptations you can use.
- Create opportunities for students to practice SEL at school and at home, through the use of play, creativity, and stress-reducing activities.
- Establish routines, and support students while they adapt to transitions.
- When plans must change, explain the adjustments to students. Model flexibility, adapatability, and strong social-emotional skills when changes occur.
A few tips and resources:

- Encourage students and families to play, and consider engaging families in the creation of a family charter or family values poster.

- Implement “brain breaks” to encourage healthy activity and emotional regulation. Try using these videos as well as these Breathe, Think, Do and body scan activities.

- Build opportunities for predictability and consistency when possible. Try incorporating self-management tools like this checklist or planner.

- Create continuity by relying on SEL activities that can be adapted to any learning model, such as morning meetings, mood meters, advisory/crew, and individual check-ins.
Culturally-responsive SEL Programs and Practices
Problem(s) of Practice

Our students of color are struggling with SEL skills such as self-awareness and growth mindset compared to white students.

“Our students from other countries are not as engaged with our SEL content as our American-born students.”

Students from certain cultures struggle to make friends with peers who are not like them… they feel left out.

Our students of color are struggling with SEL skills such as self-awareness and growth mindset compared to white students.
What is Cultural Responsiveness About?

- It is not a stage, but a continuum
- It is about inviting students and parents into the SEL conversations… with their own strengths and skills
- It requires suspending assumptions, and unleashing curiosity
- It necessitates that we understand the world not only as we experience it, but as our students experience it
Strategies

Enhancing Cultural Responsiveness:

- Invite to the conversation *diverse voices* at each stage of SEL program/practice decision-making

- Promote *positive group identity* in the context of *self awareness*

- Explore *different cultural norms, values, and practices* mediating *relationships*

- Promote *critical consciousness* when teaching about *social awareness*
A few tips and resources:

- **Identity Project**: Promoting adolescents’ ethnic-racial identity development

- How to promote **critical consciousness** among youth

- The Education Trust’s **Social, Emotional and Academic Development through an Equity Lens**

- CASEL’s **Equity & Social and Emotional Learning: A Cultural Analysis**
Integrating SEL into Academic Instruction
Problem(s) of Practice

"How do we integrate SEL so that it doesn’t feel like an “add on’?”

“Should we just rely on a pre-packaged curriculum to teach SEL?”

“Teachers are having a hard time understanding how SEL integrates with their content, whether it’s history, music, literature, math, etc. What tools exist to help with this?”
Supporting SEL Integration:

**EXAMINE** the ways in which your identities, actions, mindsets, and emotions encourage or inhibit an equitable and inclusive learning environment.

**CULTIVATE** a learning environment in which all community members are valued, can enact their agency, build meaningful relationships, and experience a strong sense of belonging.

**TEACH** vocabulary, skills, and strategies related to SEL in explicit ways that involve input from and collaboration with families and students.

**MODEL** social-emotional skills and mindsets through demonstration, embodiment, and overt narration.

**COACH** students as they practice, generalize, and apply their skills and mindsets in a variety of complex, new, planned, and unplanned situations.
A few tips and resources:

- The two-page Quick Reference Guide provides a conceptual understanding of SEL Integration.

- The SEL Integration Approach School Leader and Educator Self-Reflection Tools were created to support both individual and collaborative reflection for educators and school leaders.

- These tools are intended to be used in conjunction with Transforming Education’s SEL Integration Approach. The areas for reflection are aligned with the elements of the SEL Integration Approach (Cultivate, Examine, Teach, Model, Coach) and support individuals in considering SEL integration from various angles.
Small Group Discussions

Joining Breakout Rooms...

Breakout Room 1
It may take a few moments.
Discussion prompts:

1. What’s one thing that has surprised you about virtual/hybrid learning models?

2. Which activities and strategies have you successfully transitioned to a virtual learning model? Which have been more challenging to adapt?

3. How have you, in a virtual/hybrid model, built a positive school culture that values the voices and experiences of students, families, and community?
Discussion prompts:

1. Which voices are involved in SEL planning and implementation at your school? Who is missing?

2. What are some strategies you can use in the classroom to promote positive group identity among youth?

3. How can you facilitate students co-constructing strategies to build positive relationships using their own cultural values, beliefs and practices?
Discussion prompts:

1. What do you see as the biggest obstacles with regard to integrating SEL into the school classrooms and culture?

2. Which activities and strategies have you successfully seen or utilized already in SEL integration?

3. How do you envision SEL integration? Regardless of grade level, what would you like to see in your classrooms and in your school in the next few years?
What are 1-2 key takeaways that were discussed by your group during the breakout session?
What’s Next?

- Check out [DESE Guidance Doc](#)
- Check out [SEL & Mental Health Academy](#) site for more resources
- [Email us](#) with any questions
Thank You!
We want your feedback!

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SELMH
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