



*A Community of Learners*

## **Informational Memo: Social Emotional Learning Update**

TO: School Board  
Superintendent Dr. Trisha Kocanda

FROM: Barry Rodgers, *Director of Innovation, Teaching, and Learning*  
Maureen Miller, *Director of Technology*  
Kelly Tess, *Assistant Superintendent*

February 25, 2020

### **Overview & Background**

This memo serves to provide an update of current efforts to support District Goal 2.1: *Build a community-wide understanding and commitment to the value of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and its impact on students' holistic success and well-being.*

As indicated in prior presentations, we focused this year's work on the alignment of the adults within our community (staff, parents, community members) on their shared understanding and dedication to supporting the social-emotional well-being of each other as well as our students.

In addition to embedding Social-Emotional Learning into staff meetings, collaborative learning team meetings (CLTs), WPSF and PTO meetings, several unique events have taken place focused specifically on SEL and the New Trier Township Superintendents have all partnered with CASEL. The District hosted its third Winnetka Parent Institute, The Alliance for Early Childhood hosted their 5th Annual Preschool-Kindergarten Summit focused solely on SEL, and the District Administration partnered with the District SEL team put together a day of learning for Institute Day on January 17, 2020.

*District 36 Institute Day*

**January 17, 2020**

Teacher Institute Day focused on SEL themes of social awareness and relationship skills. Teachers meet with committees in the morning and were entertained and educated by *The Second City Works* in the afternoon. To end the day, teachers broke out by school groups to debrief their experiences.

**About Second City Works:**

SCW uses the improv methods pioneered on the Second City stages to help people and companies improve their performance. Their Professional Development programs combine interactive exercises, facilitated debriefs, and practical application to get people excited about learning. This firsthand experience helps participants internalize better ways to communicate, collaborate, and innovate – all while building comfort with risk and change

**WPI: Social Emotional Learning: Social Awareness and Relationship Skills**  
**January 30, 2020**

The session was presented by District Facilitators, teachers, and parents. Kindergarten teacher, Missy Parks, shared how the continuum of self-awareness (ME) and social awareness (YOU) leads to relationship skills (WE) in Kindergarten. Social Worker, Barb Caines, described what that looks like as students progress through 8th grade with perspective taking, empathy, healthy relationship boundaries, and conflict management.

**Social Awareness**

The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability 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. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed

This was the second in a series of three WPI workshops to be offered this school year focusing on this important District-wide initiative. A link to the presentation

can be found here: [January SEL WPI](#)

*5th Annual Preschool-Kindergarten Summit: Bringing Social Emotional Learning to the Surface, Teaching with Intent*

<https://2020annualpreschoolkindergartens.sched.com/>

The PreK Summit continues to be a sought after ticket with over 200 attendees. The keynote address, "The Resonant Classroom: Attuning to Young Children's Social and Emotional Development" was given by Jennifer S. Miller, M.Ed. She addressed the following questions: How can we understand the developmental urges that drive our children in their play so that we can support and build upon those drives deepening their learning? With their needs in mind, how can we shape our language, environments, and daily routines in ways that exercise children's self-awareness, empathy, kindness, impulse control and a sense of responsibility?

Conference breakout sessions were led by both local and national experts and leaders, including:

- A-Z Mindfulness, Lani Gerszonovicz, Banner Day Camp
- Creating Inclusive Classroom Communities, Katy Fattaleh, The Nora Project
- Learning to Harmonize; Teaching Young Children Collaboration Skills, or the Fundamentals of Playing and Working with Others, Jennifer S. Miller, M.Ed.
- Trauma Is a Word; Not a Sentence, Wendy Turner
- Understanding and Supporting the Regulatory Mechanisms for Young Children, Megan Carrick, MOTR/L

Teachers walked away inspired and ready to take that next step to try in their classroom. Resources from the event sessions, including handouts and videos are linked to the [Preschool-Kindergarten Summit Resource Archive](#).

***New Trier Township - new CASEL Partnership Launched (official statement below)***

The seven New Trier Township public school districts, along with NSSED, are proud to announce our partnership with the premiere PreK-12 Social Emotional Learning (SEL) research institution, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Social-Emotional Learning is integral to the health, well-being, and academic success of our students. Our partnership with

CASEL will allow us to more effectively build SEL competencies and awareness across our communities. Our collaborative work launches with a two-day Institute this June and extends to a Township-wide Teacher Institute Day in February 2021. We look forward to the positive impact our coordinated efforts will have for the youth, educators, and broader community of New Trier Township.

### **Executive Functioning and SEL Descriptors**

The District DSS Committee, in collaboration with the Department of Innovation, Teaching, and Learning, have been actively working to establish guidelines for writing executive functioning goals and to provide overall better services for students. A major product of this effort is the creation of a goal bank that features both SEL performance descriptors and executive functioning indicators to guide discrepancy statements. The goal bank breaks down expectations for executive functioning at each grade level. This document and the extensive work involved demonstrates how Winnetka is leading the way in this critical area. The goal bank is being reviewed and utilized by DSS staff. Time will be built-in next year for all grade-level teachers to review the executive functioning expectations for feedback.

### **Anxious Brains Conference: Helping Kids Feel Calm and Connected**

Eleven teachers and seven administrators from the SEL Supercommittee attended the [Anxious Brains Conference](#) on February 14-16 in San Francisco, California. The Conference, sponsored by the Learning and the Brain organization featured the preeminent leaders and authors in the field including Dr. Dan Siegel (UCLA), Dr. Madeline Levine (Stanford), Dr. Bruce Perry (Northwestern), Dr. Pamela Cantor (Harvard), and Dr. Ross Greene (Virginia Tech). Sessions addressed topical issues facing schools and families including:

- The brain science of anxiety, adversity, and toxic stress
- Strategies for dealing with struggling and challenging students and behaviors
- Fostering positive, secure connections and teacher-student relationships
- Strategies and activities for coping, calming, and reducing stress
- Teaching and parenting all children to thrive in a high-stress world
- Creating trauma-sensitive schools where kids feel safe and supported

Attendance was made possible in part through the generous support of the

Winnetka Public Schools Foundation. Staff greatly appreciated the opportunity to build their capacity in this critical area and will use the information and skills to better inform SEL programming for all students in Winnetka. The team of attendees are reconvening to develop educational outreach opportunities for staff and parents showcasing what was learned.

### **Next Steps**

The District will continue to steward the important work around the goal of social-emotional learning leading to the adoption of an SEL framework at the end of the 2019-20 school year.

- Adoption of SEL Framework for 2020-2021 in May 2020 for Implementation scheduled for Fall 2020.
- WPI: Tuesday, April 7, 9:30-10:30 am Skokie Community Room CASEL Competency: Responsible Decision Making
- In partnership with the D36 SEL Parent Advocacy Team, the District will roll out a web presence on social emotional learning in early March. The website will provide information and resources for parents regarding this important initiative.

“It is difficult, if not impossible, for adults to help students build skills that they themselves do not possess. It is vital, then, for adults working in educational settings to have strong SEL skills themselves.” – Stephanie Jones