SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) SUPPORTS FOR HIGH SCHOOLS

Schools across the country will be supporting students differently post-covid, and in support of the effort to give high school students what they need to support SEL, the Center for High School Success has put together a differentiated set of resources to meet the unique needs of the moment we are in.

We strongly encourage you to continue the focus on SEL even though the pandemic feels like it's in our rear view mirrors. Continue to create space for staff and students in our learning communities to see each other, listen to each other, and learn from each other.

We honor and acknowledge that individual school and district contexts vary widely, and we present the resources below as a set of options from which school teams can draw.

HOW IT IS INTENDED TO BE USED:

This list of all SEL supports was curated with intentionality to meet known and anticipated needs from our collective experience with the global pandemic in support of welcoming staff, students, and families back with a focus on antiracist SEL.

This guide is intended to be used to inform planning for:

▶ leadership gatherings, staff meetings and professional learning days;

▶ development of lessons and routines for students; and

▶ partnering with families.

This guide will be most useful for administrators, classroom teachers, and those planning supports, such as SEL/PBIS leaders, advisory leads, and counselors.

Our three recommendations include:

1. Acknowledge, Honor, and Utilize This Experience

2. Invest in Relationships, Community, and Partnerships

3. Implement Comprehensive SEL Supports with Universal Screening

ACKNOWLEDGE, HONOR, AND UTILIZE THIS EXPERIENCE

This past year was as complex as it was unique: many of us experienced tremendous hardship, the loss of loved ones, and were challenged in our physical, mental, and emotional health. Many of us grappled with multiple pandemics (COVID, persistent police brutality, community, and political violence), adapted or reinforced our protective factors and deepened our resilience. Students and educators developed innovative new ways of working together on digital platforms and established new ways of building learning communities. We have so much to learn from this past year, and it is important to create some space to pause, reflect, inquire, share, heal, and grow together.

Just as you wouldn't begin your first staff meeting together after more than a year apart by jumping into page one of your school improvement plan, please do not start on the first day of school by jumping into your course syllabus and conveying to students that 20-21 was a "lost year" and that our students are *way behind* so we *can't waste time* on community building and relationship development.

Do not convey to your students that their time at home was lost or wasted time. This deficit-based approach does not honor the deep and culturally relevant learning that our students engaged in with their families and communities *throughout their lifespan.* Districts across the country are working to provide equitable outcomes for students, and this is an incredible opportunity to honor what our students and staff have experienced this year, and to use this rare set of experiences to get better at our shared work of creating inclusive, supportive school communities for all students.

INVEST IN RELATIONSHIPS, COMMUNITY, AND PARTNERSHIPS

As always, the time invested in building relationships with each other and as school, department, and classroom communities is essential for academic success and for creating welcoming school and workplace cultures. If you are feeling urgency to dive into your academic content immediately on the first day of school, please *trust the robust neuroscience and learning science literature* that urges us all to create and sustain predictable, safe, and culturally affirming school communities in order to maximize student growth across all grade levels and content areas.

Similarly, it is critical to reach out and *connect with your students and families as essential partners.* Ask them to share what strategies and adaptations they made over the past year that were particularly helpful; ask what supports, scaffolds, and routines family members provided that worked well. This truly is a once-in-a career opportunity to learn from and with students and families—*if we ask.*

IMPLEMENT COMPREHENSIVE SEL SUPPORTS WITH UNIVERSAL SCREENING

The Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL) tells us that SEL is most effective when implemented across three broad domains, described below. To best target, differentiate, and monitor these interventions for students and staff, we also recommend that universal SEL screening be included as a key component of your multi-tiered, preventative school and district approach to implementing comprehensive SEL supports.

1. **School Climate and Culture:** SEL supports are most likely to thrive in school and classroom communities where students and staff feel welcome, culturally affirmed, safe, and involved in creating and sustaining predictable and structured routines.

2. **Direct SEL Instruction:** Standards-based SEL competencies are best developed in response to consistent direct instruction, with modeling, practice, feedback, and strategies for generalization across settings.

3. **Academic Integration:** In addition to direct instruction with explicit skills, SEL practices integrated daily into content lessons are also proven to improve student and adult outcomes across *all academic content areas*. Practices such as the SEL Signature Practices and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provide easily accessible routines and planning tools to differentiate with emotional intelligence and learner variability.

IF YOUR COMMUNITY LEARNS WELL THROUGH SHARED TEXTS, TRY THESE:

"Too much focus on 'Learning Loss' will be a historic mistake: Learning loss is real and needs to be addressed, but how we go about it should be commensurate with the size of the moment." (Merrell, 2021). This article is a quick read that describes how to consider "learning loss" in context, and it provides clear guidance for schools and districts. https://www.edutopia.org/article/ too-much-focus-learning-loss-will-be-historic-mistake

"Why mental health is key to dealing with learning loss." This brief article by Carolyn Jones (2021) provides recent survey data and guidance on how and why to prioritize student mental health to support academic growth. https://edsource.org/2021/why-mental-health-is-the-key-to-dealing-with-learning-loss/653087

"Learning isn't just academic. Here are the ways the pandemic can aid your child's brain development." Written by pediatric neurologist and parent Sarah Levin Allen (2021), this article describes key strategies to teach students to make the most of COVID and remote learning. https://www.inquirer.com/health/expert-opinions/pandemic-brain-development-kids-20210330.html

"Our kids are not broken." This brief Atlantic article from Ron Berger of Harvard (2021) implores us to focus on resilience and all that our children HAVE learned during the pandemics (resilience, creativity, flexibility) as we welcome them back to in-person, and advises us to focus on making learning meaningful, not solely on remediation. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/03/how-to-get-our-kids-back-on-track/618269/

"Why SEL isn't enough." This excellent article by Dr. Dena Simmons (2021) urges the centering of antiracist work in our SEL initiatives. https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/why-sel-alone-isnt-enough

IF YOUR COMMUNITY IS LOOKING FOR PLANNING GUIDES FROM TRUSTED ORGANIZATIONS, TRY THESE:

SCHOOL CLIMATE, CULTURE, AND SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT THE WHOLE CHILD

"Returning to school during and after crisis: A guide to supporting states, districts, schools, educators, and students through a MTSS framework." (2021) This guide by the Center on PBIS at the University of Oregon includes exceptional guidance on revisiting and revising essential PBIS practices for supporting staff and students returning from COVID. https://www.pbis.org/resource/returning-to-school-during-and-after-crisis

Reunite, Renew and Thrive: A Social and Emotional Learning Roadmap for Reopening School and Refocus on the SEL Roadmap: Actions for a Successful Second Semester (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning). These roadmaps for school leaders and leadership teams identify four critical practices to foster the skills and learning environments that students and adults need when planning for the transition back to the school building and how to continue using those practices throughout the school year. https://casel.org/reopening-with-sel/

How Learning Happens (Edutopia). In this video series, researchers explore how educators can guide all students, regardless of their developmental starting points, to become productive and engaged learners. https://www.edutopia.org/how-learning-happens

The Whole Child: Building Systems of Integrated Support During and After COVID-19 (Center for Optimized Student Supports). This guide draws on the science of child development and evidence-based approaches to build a more resilient school community through systems of integrated student support. https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/lynch-school/sites/ctc.html

Redesign Schools for Stronger Relationships (Learning Policy Institute). This section of the Restarting and Reinventing School: Learning in the Time of COVID and Beyond addresses how educators and policymakers can redesign schools to build stronger relationships. https://restart-reinvent.learningpolicyinstitute.org/redesign-schools-stronger-relationships

Gauging School Climate (National Association of State Boards of Education). As school buildings further reopen after remote learning, school climate will matter more than ever. This issue of NASBE's State Education Standard underscores how state policymakers and education leaders can plan now to create safe, supportive learning environments for the return of students and teachers to buildings. https://www.nasbe.org/gauging-school-climate/

MENTAL HEALTH AND SEL

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines mental health as, "Mental health involves effective functioning in daily activities resulting in

▶ Productive activities (work, school, caregiving);
▶ Healthy relationships; and
▶ Ability to adapt to change and cope with adversity.

Although this guide primarily focuses on SEL, there is some overlap with mental health so we've included some important resources here.

"Mental Health and Social Emotional Learning" by Clark McKown (2021). This excellent article works to make clear the distinctions and overlap between SEL and mental health. It is a highly accessible, useful piece as you are establishing school-based teams and clarifying roles in support of children's mental health: https://xsel-labs.com/blog/mental-health-and-social-emotional-learning/

"An Introduction to the Interconnected Systems Framework" (2021). This framework is the go-to guide for how to systematically and efficiently integrate mental health supports into MTSS. https://www.pbis.org/video/an-introduction-to-the-interconnected-systems-framework

SEL, BEHAVIOR, AND TRAUMA

Trauma-Informed SEL Toolkit (Transforming Education). This toolkit provides information about how trauma impacts students, strategies educators can implement in the classroom, secondary traumatic stress, and strategies for educator self-care. https://transformingeducation.org/resources/trauma-informed-sel-toolkit/

"Back to school resources for families and educators" (2021). This website is filled with high quality, recent articles that all focus on ways to best prepare our students for success in returning to school after COVID (mental health, anxiety, behavior, etc.). https://childmind.org/backtoschool/

"The role of families in PBIS" (2021). This excellent resource from the Center on PBIS provides guidance for us to center family input and voice in our PBIS systems which will be critical as we return from COVID: https://www.pbis.org/topics/family

IF YOUR COMMUNITY HAS A CULTURE OF USING MORNING MEETINGS OR COMMUNITY CIRCLES, TRY THESE TARGETED PROMPTS FOR WELCOMING YOUR COMMUNITY BACK:

COMMUNITY CIRCLE PROMPTS

▶ Thinking back on the past year, what word best captures your experiences?

▶ What skills did you lean on that you already developed that helped you cope with these new challenges?

▶ What new skills did you develop over the past year that were helpful?

▶ What surprised you about this past year?

▶ Many of us experienced loss and hardship over the past year. Is there anything that you feel like sharing with our team?

▶ Is there something that we can do as we return to work that would be especially supportive of you?

▶ When you think about welcoming students back to school, what makes you the most excited? Nervous?

▶ When you think about the way schools were before COVID, what is something that you want to be sure we keep doing well? What is something that you think we should STOP doing? What is something NEW?

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