

Social Emotional Learning (SEL): Part I



November 17, 2020

Background

In the 2018-19 school year, the Des Moines Public Schools Board of Directors engaged parents, community members/partners, district staff, and students in work sessions that resulted in three areas of focus for district goal setting. These areas are:

- *Early Literacy* – how well are students learning to read in early elementary school.
- *Algebra* – are students taking and passing Algebra I as freshman in high school.
- *Social Emotional Learning (SEL)* – how well are students learning to connect with others, develop identity, and how welcome and safe do students feel.

Update

On November 17th, district staff shared the following update on progress toward the Social and Emotional Learning goal area. The full presentation can be reviewed [here](#).

SEL Coordinator Hire – this is a district level staff member that was added this year, who will support social and emotional learning across the district. He will create and adjust social and emotional learning programs with schools, help staff know how to support students, and organize resources from inside and outside the district. He will coordinate the work of the district Social and Emotional Learning Task Force, which includes more than 50 staff from across DMPS.

Integrated Services Model – this is the team-based system that is used to ensure behavioral supports, social services, and mental health, along with instruction and school management, work together in schools. For the 2020-2021 school year, seventeen schools have begun to use this model.

- a. The participating schools have made the first steps towards an Integrated Services Model. This means they have been creating systems to coordinate how students receive services from different staff, have clear understanding of what level of support students receive, and gain universal understanding of the jobs and roles of the different staff members. These teams have also been providing professional learning for other building staff around Integrated Services.
- b. The five-year outcome of the Integrated Services Model is a districtwide system for meeting “foundational” needs of students and families (food insecurity, housing and transportation needs), that all students have access to a system of supports as needed, and that most students are successful in the classroom without additional support.

District Plan for Social Emotional Learning – this plan organizes the work of the district level team into four focus areas: (1) Building a support plan, (2) Strengthening adult SEL, (3) Promoting SEL for students, and (4) Creating assessment and evaluation for improvement. During school year 2020-21 the focus is completing a district plan for each of these areas to make sure the district is effective, and that growth is maintained over time. Current efforts include:

- a. Use of the “Three Signature Practices” – these are practices that occur throughout meetings, trainings, and events to ensure all members of the team are heard, feel included, and see themselves as part of the community. These are being implemented at the district level.
- b. SEL Training for District and Building Leadership – allows adults in the district to recognize and apply social emotional learning, strategies, and feel supported and engaged.
- c. SEL Curriculum – these are the tools, standards, practices, and themes that will be used to teach students the skills of social emotional learning. This work will happen both on its own, through targeted learning, and integrated with other district curriculum. This year, the district is working to make sure that current efforts in schools are aligned and plan steps for implementation districtwide.
- d. SEL Assessment – the district is in its third year of using the Panorama Perspective Survey, which gives schools and the district information on students' perspective on their own SEL skills, supports, environment, and teacher expectations. Areas of focus for data review include students' belief in their ability to be successful and student-teacher relationships; both data points show that students in DMPS are at the national average in elementary school, but well below by the time they enter high school. The SEL Task Force is utilizing this data to inform strategy and goals around the SEL work in DMPS.