



Excellence Through Social Emotional Learning Network & Data Analysis Cohort

FY 2018-2019

Request for District Applications

Submit by August 3, 2018



Excellence Through Social Emotional Learning Network

The Excellence through Social Emotional Learning (exSEL) Network is seeking school districts across Massachusetts to participate in one-year partnerships designed to increase their capacity to improve social-emotional learning and build more supportive learning environments. This project is premised on the understanding that success in school and life depends on more than academic ability alone. Research has shown that social-emotional skills have a significant impact on students' academic performance and persistence in school, as well as their lifelong health, wealth, and well-being.¹

The exSEL Network—and its partners the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy (Rennie) and Transforming Education (TransformEd)—will work with district teams to build knowledge and understanding of how the effective implementation of SEL can positively impact students' learning and behavioral outcomes. Participants will gain critical insight on how best to support the development of specific social-emotional skills and competencies through changes in policies and practice at the district, school, and classroom levels. In addition, participants will have the option to engage in deeper data analysis work, using existing academic and behavioral indicators to guide their SEL efforts while developing new and effective strategies for tracking and measuring student progress moving forward.

exSEL Network for 2018-2019

Over the course of the 2017-18 school year, nine Massachusetts districts came together to form the first exSEL Network cohort. Together, they engaged in a planning process to assess their readiness to operationalize SEL. They gained greater awareness of what it takes to integrate SEL into daily practice, developed preliminary integration plans, and examined strategies for measuring SEL outcomes. This first year of exSEL illuminated a multitude of learnings about districts' wide array of SEL-related needs, existing efforts, and varying capacities to implement effective practices. Furthermore, districts articulated a strong desire to access deeper knowledge and more customized assistance around specific SEL competencies, instruments, and measurement tools.

Starting in the 2018-19 school year, TransformEd and Rennie will offer an expanded group of districts the opportunity to participate in a structured **Learning Community** to obtain deeper content knowledge and interactive professional development around the strategies and learning environments that support students' social-emotional development. Participants will also be able to enhance their experience by opting in to an additional extension opportunity: the **Data Inquiry & Action Cohort**. As part of this cohort, districts will receive individualized consulting on how to use data to inform their SEL efforts. This support will focus on making sense of existing data that the district has already collected and developing a plan to monitor progress of SEL-related efforts in the future.

The Learning Community offers several benefits to participating districts. Participants will increase their understanding of the content and importance of SEL, build their capacity to use actionable data to assess and guide the development of students' social-emotional skills within a positive learning environment, and become part of a community where educators can learn from one another and support each other's systemic and practice shifts. Additionally, we know from an extensive research literature that better-developed social-emotional skills position children for a healthier and more rewarding life. We anticipate that districts working with the exSEL Network will serve as a model for other districts and the state of Massachusetts on supporting whole-child and SEL development in future years.

¹ For more information on the longitudinal research base showing the impact of social-emotional competencies on students' outcomes, see Chris Gabrieli, Dana Ansel, and Sara Bartolino Krachman, "Ready to Be Counted: The Research Case for Education Policy Action on Non-Cognitive Skills," December 2015, http://www.transformingeducation.org/s/ReadytoBe-Counted_Release.pdf

exSEL 2018-2019 Network Options (*detailed*)

exSEL Learning Community

The exSEL Learning Community is planned for approximately 12 districts, contingent on interest and demand. Participants will be provided direct access to local and national subject matter experts, as well as a community of support where educators can learn from one another. By taking a systems approach and relying on data to identify and scale effective practices, teams of district leaders—superintendents, union presidents, school committee members, teachers, administrators, and parents—will work within the Learning Community to increase their understanding of importance of individual social-emotional competencies, such as social awareness, growth mindset, self-management, relationship-building, and agency (see TransformEd’s [Resources page](#) for more information on each competency). Each session will address how these competencies are defined; why they matter for student academic, behavior, and lifelong outcomes; and what research-based strategies are known to support students’ development of these competencies.

In addition to offering deep content knowledge and interactive professional development around core SEL competencies and strategies, network participants will assess their individual needs in order to prioritize specific SEL competencies and strategies; begin to map necessary resources and supports to foster SEL development in students and adults; and identify the systemic structures, processes, and policies that can sustain effective SEL practices over time.

The exSEL 2018-2019 Learning Community will convene for five full-day meetings during the school year, including an SEL Summit in May 2019 that will be open to educators across Massachusetts and New England. During these convenings, districts will:

1. Engage in interactive professional development with local and national experts around SEL and the learning environments that support students’ academic and social-emotional development;
2. Dissect the importance and relevance of various SEL competencies given local context and priorities;
3. Learn how to support the development of particular SEL competencies in students and adults;
4. Reflect on existing classroom, school, and district efforts in relation to SEL best practices; and
5. Develop concrete action steps to support continuous improvement of SEL efforts.

exSEL 2018-2019 Learning Community Network				
Convening 1 September ‘18	Convening 2 November ‘18	Convening 3 January ‘19	Convening 4 March ‘19	SEL Statewide Summit May ‘19
Interactive PD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEL in the service of student agency and empowerment 	Interactive PD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social awareness • Sense of belonging • Relationship-building 	Interactive PD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth mindset • Self-efficacy 	Interactive PD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-management • Mindfulness • Disciplinary policy and practice 	Interactive PD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exemplar district share best practices
Self-Assessment & Continuous Improvement Strategies				

Additional Extension Offering: exSEL Data Inquiry & Action Cohort

Districts participating in the 2018-2019 exSEL Learning Community will also be able to apply to join the Data Inquiry & Action cohort, in which TransformEd with Rennie's assistance will provide customized, one-on-one technical assistance around using data to inform SEL practice. The objective of this optional extension is to help districts make sense of and act on existing data, as well as develop a plan for using data to inform SEL practice more holistically in future years. To accomplish these objectives, the Data Analysis Cohort will:

1. Develop expertise on how to implement a data-informed approach to SEL;
2. Examine data already collected (e.g., DART, culture/climate surveys, and academic data) to identify relevant practice improvements around SEL;
3. Leverage on-site and virtual consulting from TransformEd and Rennie teams to develop a more comprehensive plan for using and collecting SEL-related data in future years;
4. Acquire sufficient knowledge and skills to begin offering SEL-related data coaching to internal teams of educators; and
5. Begin to map necessary resources and supports to support future SEL data collection.

exSEL 2018-2019 Data Inquiry & Action Extension Offering									
Data Team Kick-Off	Convening 1	Data Inquiry & Action Session	Convening 2	Action Plan/ Data Touchpoint	Convening 3	Data Inquiry & Action Session	Convening 4	Action Plan/ Data Touchpoint	SEL Statewide Summit
Sept '18		Oct '18		Dec '18		Feb '19		April '19	
On-Site		On-Site		Virtual		On-Site		Virtual	

Districts that opt into the Data Inquiry and Action Extension will meet individually with the TransformEd and Rennie team, both in person and virtually. At the kick-off meeting, TransformEd and Rennie staff will provide an overview of the year and begin working with district teams to inventory the data that they have available that relates to students' social-emotional development.

During the two on-site Data Inquiry and Action Sessions, TransformEd staff with Rennie's assistance will work closely with individual districts to examine their existing data and begin planning how to assess additional components of SEL (including both student competencies and learning environment). These in-person work sessions will be supplemented by two virtual check-ins, which will allow additional opportunities for district staff to receive expert guidance from TransformEd and Rennie on their plan for collecting and using data to inform the district's work to support students' social-emotional development.

exSEL 2018-19: Request for Applications for the exSEL Learning Community

I. Selection Criteria

There are no restrictions on size, location, general demographics or level of SEL engagement for participating districts; however, exSEL seeks to engage a diverse range of districts and schools with respect to each of these factors. In applying to be a part of the exSEL Learning Community Network, districts must agree to a year-long commitment, focused on improving social-emotional skills among ALL students in their district (e.g., not a single subgroup or tier of students).

II. Instructions

Interested districts should submit a proposal that includes brief responses to the items listed below in a single PDF document. The full application must be emailed to info@renniecenter.org by August 3, 2018 at 5:00pm. Applicants will receive notification of their status by August 10, 2018.

III. Applications (no more than 3 pages) should include:

a. Introductory letter

Include at least one district contact person—name, phone, and email address—for all follow-up questions and communications related to the application.

b. Background

This section should provide a short description of the district, such as its size, demographics, number of schools, academic performance, and any additional context that might be helpful.

c. List of proposed District SEL Team members

This section should provide a proposed list of 4-6 staff members (including name and title/role) the district intends to include on an SEL leadership team. This team should be representative of a variety of school community stakeholders, such as central office administrators, school committee members, school leaders, teachers, counselors, union representatives, families, and students. We strongly recommend that at least one teacher, a principal, and an administrator with decision-making authority be included in the District SEL Teams. In addition to this team, districts will also be able to send 4-6 additional staff members to each of the convenings. Districts might choose to send different staff to different convenings depending on the subjects to be covered. However, we expect the members of the District SEL Team to attend all 5 sessions.

NOTE: Districts may send a maximum of 10 individuals to each Convening.

d. Brief description of current efforts to improve SEL in district

This section should describe briefly:

- 1) what the district hopes to achieve by focusing on SEL;
- 2) a general overview of the current efforts to improve SEL in the district (e.g., use of an SEL curriculum or program and the schools or grades or subpopulations included in this program; professional development and training efforts around related areas like trauma, self-regulation, etc.);
- 3) Identified or planned SEL implementation and assessment priorities (e.g., rolling out a district-wide SEL assessment or intensifying training on SEL classroom practices for the middle school); and
- 4) Expectations for the SEL Learning Community (e.g., specific competencies that are you interested in exploring/prioritizing or types of resources that are you interested in).

IV. Cost

The cost for a district to participate in the exSEL Learning Community is **\$10,000**. This covers the cost of convenings for the full year (i.e., facilitators and presenters, printed materials, location and food costs) and attendance to the exSEL Statewide Summit. In addition to local funding or any other available sources (e.g., private grants or foundation funding, etc.), interested districts may wish to consider federal and state funding sources that could potentially be used to support participation in exSEL. Depending on locally identified needs, goals, and priorities, these funds might include those that support educator professional development, well-rounded educational opportunities, and safe and supportive learning environments (which could include federally-funded Title II-A, Title IV-A, and IDEA Making Money Matter M3 funding; and state-funded safe and supportive schools grants). If you have any questions about the appropriate use of these funds, please contact the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (via the grant leads or achievement@doe.mass.edu).

V. Timeline

Districts will be notified of their application status by August 10, 2018. Shortly thereafter, network participants will receive an MOU to confirm their participation as well as a more detailed proposed scope of work and timeline for 2018-2019.

exSEL 2018-19: OPTIONAL Extension Application for the exSEL Data Inquiry & Action Cohort

I. Instructions

Districts can only apply to the Data Inquiry & Action Cohort as an add-on to the application to the exSEL Learning Community. Therefore, districts must submit a full application in accordance with the instructions above in addition to answering the questions listed below. The Data Inquiry & Action Cohort application should be submitted as a single document in PDF format. This application must be emailed to info@renniecenter.org by August 3, 2018 at 5:00pm. Applicants will receive notification of their status by August 10, 2018.

II. Applications (no more than 2 pages) should include:

- a. **List of existing and potential data sources related to SEL:** This section should have two parts. First, list any current school- or district-level data sources beyond academic data that could be used to reflect on or inform your ongoing work on SEL. For example, your schools may be collecting data on bullying, school climate, or student behavior. Second, identify additional data you hope to collect in the future to inform and assess your progress on SEL (e.g. additional information on specific competencies and learning environments). This list does not need to be comprehensive, but it will provide a useful starting point when discussing a data plan for your district.
- b. **Description of district objectives:** A brief explanation of what the district hopes to achieve by participating in the Data Inquiry & Action Cohort.

III. Cost

The cost for a district to participate in the exSEL Data Inquiry & Action Cohort is an additional **\$15,000** on top of the Learning Community fee. This covers the cost of data facilitation and access to content experts (including planning, in-person and virtual trainings, and travel costs) as well as any necessary materials. See section IV above for funding suggestions.