Supporting Students Through Social-Emotional Learning

MetroWest Kids Initiative – March 19, 2021
Agenda

Welcome and Introductions

The Current Moment

What is Social-Emotional Learning?

Supporting Students’ Wellbeing

Wrapping Up

Panel Discussion
Welcome

Senate President Karen Spilka
Introductions

The mission of the Rennie Center is to improve public education through well-informed decision-making based on deep knowledge and evidence of effective policymaking and practice.
The Current Moment
COVID-19, Trauma, and Learning Loss
The Impact of COVID-19

- Collective and Individual Trauma
- Disrupted Routines
- Academic Learning Loss
COVID-19 has impacted the entire world, and brought with it subsequent trauma for students, families, educators, communities, and more.

In particular, the COVID-19 crisis has added to the deep layers of trauma and oppression felt among marginalized communities, making it essential for schools to apply an equity lens alongside trauma-sensitive and healing-centered practices.

➔ **Academic Difficulty:** Children who have experienced trauma may experience difficulty with memory, organizational skills, and verbal skills.

➔ **Behavioral Changes:** Children who have experienced trauma may exhibit internalizing symptoms, such as withdrawal, or externalizing symptoms, such as aggression.

➔ **Relationship Difficulty:** Children who have experienced trauma may have difficulty trusting adults and peers and they often lack appropriate social skills, making it difficult for children to form positive relationships.
Disrupted Routines

COVID-19 has caused a widespread disruption to our daily lives. Whether at work, at school, or at home, families have been forced to adjust to long-term changes in their daily schedules.

These changes can mean a loss of skills gained during schooling or out-of-school time, and they can lead to increased anxiety, depression, and behavioral needs.
While all students are suffering, those who came into the pandemic with the fewest academic opportunities are on track to exit with the greatest learning loss." — McKinsey & Company, COVID-19 and learning loss—disparities grow and students need help

What is the COVID Slide?
What is Social-Emotional Learning?

How SEL positively impacts students who have experienced trauma
Social-Emotional Learning

SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to:

- develop healthy identities,
- manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals,
- feel and show empathy for others,
- establish and maintain supportive relationships, and
- make responsible and caring decisions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning)
Transformative SEL is...

→ A process where students and teachers build strong, respectful relationships founded on an appreciation of similarities and differences; learn to critically examine root causes of inequity; and develop collaborative solutions to community and social problems (Measuring SEL, 2018).

→ Transformative SEL is anchored in the notion of justice-oriented citizenship, with issues of culture, identity, agency, belonging, and engagement explored as relevant expressions of the five core SEL competencies (CASEL).
Why does Transformative SEL matter now?

➔ Children returned to school this year grappling with the emotional impact of the global pandemic and nationwide confrontation with persistent racism.

➔ In addition to a disrupted daily routine and a long period of isolation from classmates, many students have experienced widespread suffering in their community, including joblessness, housing instability, illness, and economic insecurity.

➔ In this time, as in others, the collective harm has disproportionately impacted low-income communities and communities of color.
Supporting Students’ Wellbeing
Strategies for schools and communities
Overview of Strategies

- Build a Sense of Belonging
- Support Student Voice and Agency
- Develop Meaningful Family Partnerships
- Social-Emotional Learning at Home
Routines and Rituals: Transferring normal classroom routines and rituals can be a useful strategy to offer consistency and build trust and confidence within a remote learning environment. This can include morning circles, weekly themes, and periodic check-ins.

Mentorship Programs: Mentorship programs provide opportunities for students to interact with peers and adults, strengthen academic skills, and form positive relationships. Through a mentorship program, adults can serve as a trusted resource when students face challenges. In addition, peer mentoring can strengthen student relationships across the school.

Affirm Student Identity: Providing the space for students to explore and affirm their identities through literature, classroom projects, and storytelling can instill community and a healthy sense of self.
Support Student Voice & Agency

Provide opportunities for students to impact their community: Empowering students to critique and dismantle the inequities they face in their communities, through capstone projects, ‘Hopes and Dreams’ identification, and other remote-friendly activities, can cultivate activism, social justice mindsets, and a positive connection with diverse communities.

Provide voice and choice in the classroom: Co-constructing rules and norms for remote learning, offering student-led video conferences, and incorporating student input into remote curriculum can foster a sense of safety and collaborative control among students.

Provide voice and choice at the school level: Administrators and educators can work with students to identify and recommend school climate improvement strategies, collaborate on decision-making processes like scheduling and hiring, and establish inclusive student government bodies.
Provide clear, two-way communication with families:

Map out who is responsible for sharing out information, through what channels, and in what necessary languages. Staff should connect with families to identify their preferred communication type. Communication should always be inclusive and utilize an asset-based lens.

Create a range of opportunities for family involvement and connection:

Find opportunities to bring families together virtually or safely in person. This can include virtual coffee chats, volunteer opportunities, or community events. Ensure that bilingual staff or interpreters are present to allow full participation by non-English speaking families.

Give families the tools to incorporate SEL at home:

Provide tips and techniques to families on how to incorporate SEL at home, including information on:

- Self-care
- Routines and intentionality
- Expression and naming of emotions
- Active listening
SEL At Home: Strategies for Families
Play Every Day: Every child should experience safe and healthy play. There are many activities that can get kids moving while teaching them social-emotional skills that are essential to helping kids combat stress and anxiety associated with the pandemic.

Establish Household and Remote School Rules and Procedures: Establishing procedures for managing health, learning new content, building relationships, and growing self-awareness and emotion management skills can help families and students who are learning at home.

Build a Family Charter: The Charter is a written document detailing how everybody in your home (or “virtual home”) wants to feel. You can do this for yourself, as a couple, or as an entire family. If you have children, depending on their age, they may need help with the writing part. But even young kids can share how they want to feel.
### SEL At Home: Strategies for Families

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<th>Enhance and Practice Executive Function Skills:</th>
<th>Engage in Creativity Together:</th>
<th>Model the Behavior You Seek:</th>
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<td>Executive function and self-regulation skills provide critical supports for learning and development. There are many developmentally appropriate activities for families to strengthen various components of their child’s executive function.</td>
<td>Examples of <strong>creativity</strong> in action include cooking or baking together, doing puzzles, coloring or art projects, playing board games, or writing a poem or a song together.</td>
<td>Children mirror what they see their family doing, including the <strong>behaviors and relationships</strong> between family members. Don’t forget to <strong>foster self-esteem</strong> in your children by giving them responsibilities, allowing them to make age-appropriate choices, and showing your appreciation to them.</td>
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Finally, don’t go it alone. Reach out to your child’s teacher and school leader to ask for tips and tricks to implement social-emotional learning at home. Utilize resources online, like the following, to find what you are most comfortable doing with your child at home:

1. CASEL’s Parent SEL Resources is a curated list of resources selected by CASEL staff that focus on the role of parents and parenting in social and emotional learning (SEL).

2. UIC’s Parent Resources is a thoughtfully curated list of resources that might assist parents in learning more about social and emotional learning in schools or in their own parenting practices with their children.


4. The Parent Academy has a Virtual Campus of resources on many aspects of student support, including social emotional development.
Learn More

Visit our website at www.renniecenter.org/research/back-school-blueprint to read our Action Guides and more!

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What questions do you have?

Please type your questions in the Q&A box
Panel Discussion
Panel Discussion

Annelise Eaton
Research Director, Rennie Center

➔ Katie Brown | Transition Coordinator, Natick High School

➔ John Crocker | Director of School Mental Health and Behavioral Services, Methuen Public Schools

➔ Tiffany Lillie | Director of the Office of Community Resource Development, Framingham Public Schools
Closing Out

Senate President Spilka

How are state policymakers working to address these issues?