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## **SCHOOL DISTRICTS TEAM UP ON SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING**

**(BOSTON, MA)** *September 14, 2017* – Nine Massachusetts school districts are joining forces to tackle issues like substance abuse, trauma, anxiety, depression, and bullying by addressing students’ social and emotional needs. Districts in the [Excellence through Social-Emotional Learning](#) (exSEL) Network will design new initiatives to help students develop skills like grit, persistence, empathy, and healthy decision-making.

These skill are tied to better academic performance, higher college graduation rates, increased employment and wages, lower risk of substance abuse and criminal activity, and better overall health and well-being.

“While Massachusetts is a national leader in academics, we have work to do when it comes to addressing the non-cognitive learning needs of our students,” said Tom Scott, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Association for School Superintendents. “Social and emotional skills are the foundation for success both in school and after graduation. Today’s employers expect workers to have technical and academic knowledge as well as a broad range of interpersonal skills.”

Participating districts will build overall knowledge of social-emotional learning practices, use actionable data to drive improvement, and share lessons learned with each other. Each district will develop a unique plan to address the specific social-emotional needs of its students.

The exSEL Network will initially focus on developing practices around a competency known as growth mindset, the belief that one’s ability can change as a result of effort, perseverance, and practice. Research shows that students’ beliefs about their own intelligence can affect engagement, motivation, and ultimately test scores and grades.

“The exSEL Network represents an exciting opportunity for a group of school districts to pursue a data-informed approach to supporting students’ social and emotional learning,” said Sara Bartolino Krachman, Executive Director of Transforming Education, one of the non-profit partners of the exSEL Network.

Together, the participating districts—Brockton, Canton, Fitchburg, Mendon-Upton, Millbury, Milton, Monomoy (Chatham and Harwich), Tri-Town (Boxford, Middleton, and Topsfield), and Whitman-Hanson—serve more than 40,000 students. The group was selected to represent a cross-

section of districts in Massachusetts after a competitive application process highlighting each districts' social-emotional needs.

“Thirty-five Massachusetts districts applied to be in this network. That kind of interest highlights the importance districts are placing on social-emotional learning,” said Chad d’Entremont, Executive Director of the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy. “This network will help schools address the learning needs of thousands of children across Massachusetts.”

The project is led by the [exSEL Coalition](#), whose members include the [Massachusetts Association of School Committees](#), [Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents](#), [Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives](#), and [Massachusetts School Administrators Association](#). The exSEL Coalition’s non-profit partners—the [Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy](#), [Transforming Education](#), and [Teachers 21](#)—will provide expertise, support, and training for the network.

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