



Superintendent Update

DERRY TOWNSHIP SD | MAY 6 2022

COMPONENTS OF SEL INSTALLMENT #2 BY DR. WINSLOW

“To know oneself is to study oneself in action with another person.” ~Bruce Lee

When I began writing about the district’s plans for social emotional learning back in September, it was with the intention of completing a three part series. I cannot believe it is already May and am just now getting to write the next Newsletter. Instead of focusing on what we will do, I will instead give an overview of what we have done and what we see as next steps and why they are so important.

As we continued our study of social emotional learning for both students and adults, we focused on very targeted areas. My last newsletter in the fall highlighted the component of Safe and Supportive Schools and Classroom Environments. As the year progressed, we continued to emphasize Safe and Supportive Schools and Classrooms, while also working on personal responsibility, particularly in the form of self-regulation. If looking at the Social Emotional Competencies, this would fall primarily under self-

awareness, but also includes some elements of relationship skills and responsible decision-making (all traits identified as desirable by managers and supervisors).

Self-Regulation:

The ability to manage and regulate one’s emotions, thoughts and behaviors in different situations - effectively managing stress, controlling impulses and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.

- Impulse control
- Stress management
- Self-discipline
- Self-motivation
- Goal setting
- Organizational skills

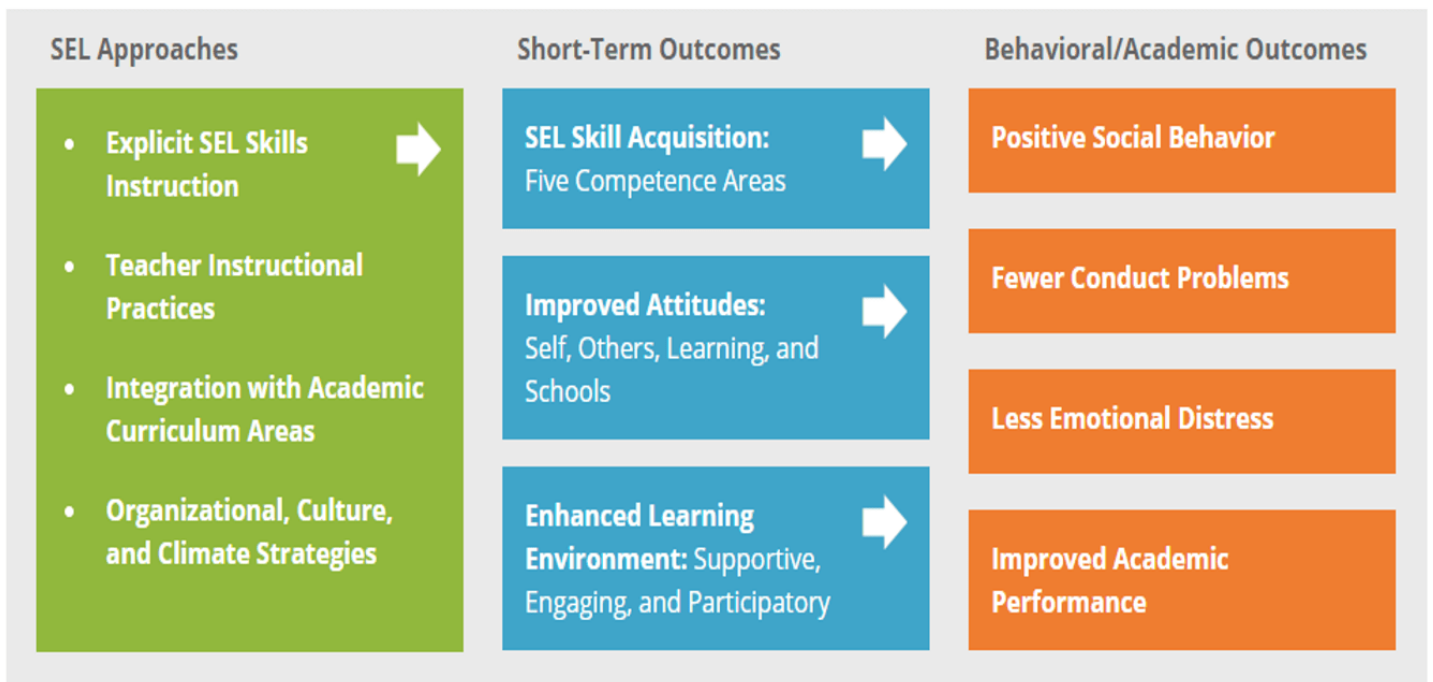




Learning about self-regulation in the context of the SEL competencies helped teachers to identify the importance of SEL outcomes for students (and themselves!) In our beginning of the year survey given in October, there were several areas that stood out in regard to student needs. One of those areas is the ability to identify and explain difficult emotions. In surveys conducted with over 7000 adults, people were able to identify an average of three emotions: happy, sad, and angry. (Brown, 2021) If adults are limited in their knowledge of emotional range and response, how can they support and model for children? So some of our initial work centered around emotions. We all have them, they are normal, our bodies will often tell us a lot about the emotion we are in and while we cannot control the emotion we are feeling, we can always control our response.

There is a multitude of research that tells us that learning and emotion are interconnected. There are emotions that lead us to be open and willing learners and emotions that literally shut down our ability to learn. We often frame these in the language of stress, so teachers learned about two types of stress: Eustress and Distress. When we are in Eustress we feel motivated, our energy is focused, we feel well within our coping abilities, we may feel excited and it improves our performance - an excellent state for learning.

When we are in distress we feel anxiety or concern, we may feel that things are outside of our coping abilities, it feels unpleasant and decreases our performance. In worst case scenarios distress can lead to mental and physical problems. Distress not only impedes learning, it can block it altogether.



Throughout the year teachers learned how strategies for calming the mind and body allow us to manage through a difficult situation and regain a state of readiness to learn (these are not new strategies - “take several deep breaths and count backwards from 10” - they are just good reminders that things we have been taught our whole lives actually work!)

Learning how to incorporate these strategies into our instructional toolboxes helps teachers to maintain a safe and consistent classroom learning environment. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure high levels of learning for each and every student - which can only happen if students are in our classrooms and ready to receive and interact with the lessons being taught.

As we bring the year to a close and begin to think about and plan for next

year, teachers have identified some specific areas for continued growth, the number one being the ability to persevere through difficulty. As we begin next year, this will be a primary focus for teacher learning so that they can better support their students when the ability to persevere seems out of reach.

A huge *Thank You* to our SEL team who has spent time honing their own skills, creating learning opportunities for their colleagues and supporting our students through this year!

Sources:

Allen, K., Kern, M.L., Vella-Brodrick, D., Hattie, J., & Waters, L. (2018). What schools need to know about fostering school belonging: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 30, 1.

Brown, B. (2021). *Atlas of the Heart*. Random House.

CASEL. (n.d.). <http://www.casel.org>

Cobb, F., & Krownapple, J. (2019). *Belonging through a culture of dignity*. Mimi & Todd.

WHAT ARE WE READING AND LISTENING TO?



Atlas of the Heart by Brene Brown is literally and figuratively a beautiful book (it is seriously gorgeous!) In this groundbreaking book, Brown walks the reader through 13 categories of emotions, what they tell us about what we are experiencing and how we might respond when in those emotions. It isn't really a "cover-to-cover" book, but one to pick up and use to better understand in applicable moments.

Collective Genius: The Art and Practice of Leading Innovation by Dr. Linda Hill, et. al. in which Hill and her colleagues assert that leading for innovation is different than leading for change and the distinctions are important when organizations are faced with a new challenge. The authors assert that the key to innovation is unlocking the creative genius of the collective organization - giving people the space and ability to take risks as problems are tackled and solved together. While published in 2014, I'm finding this book and this work to be of incredible relevance in this space and time.

A Slight Change of Plans is a podcast in which host Maya Shankar explores how we respond when life takes an unexpected turn. Maya was an exceptional violinist who experienced a life-altering hand injury after being accepted to Juilliard - the injury was so severe that she was never able to play again and changed the trajectory of her life. In her podcast she explores how other people have also experienced change in their lives and how they were and continue to be impacted. a

