



Cherokee County
School District

*Committee Report
Spring 2019*

*Superintendent's Ad Hoc Committee
for Social Emotional Learning*

*Cherokee County School District
Facilitated by Dr. Lissa Pijanowski*

Section I: Purpose

The Superintendent's Ad Hoc Committee for Social Emotional Learning was formed to take a whole-child approach in order to identify the needs of CCSD's students beyond academics. This data-driven process objectively identified the district's strengths as well as its opportunities to improve student health and well-being. Cherokee County School District (CCSD) recognizes that comprehensive and innovative approaches to teaching and learning are needed to ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills to be college, career and life ready in the 21st century. Often, the knowledge and skills needed for student success are those not explicitly stated in State academic standards nor assessed on standardized assessments.

Top 10 Skills 2020 Graduates Need

- Complex Problem Solving
- Critical Thinking
- Creativity
- People Management
- Coordinating with Others
- Emotional Intelligence
- Judgement and Decision-Making
- Service Orientation
- Negotiation
- Cognitive Flexibility

World Economic Forum (weforum.org)

Therefore, the challenge set forth by the Superintendent of Schools is one of a moral obligation – to positively impact not just the minds of Cherokee students, but also their hearts. As a learning organization, we must engage our community and partners to embrace all of our children to ensure their success and well-being.

The committee formed a strong belief statement and vision for intentional integration of social-emotional learning:

Cherokee County School District believes in strengthening our school community through a focus on Social Emotional Learning, a process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to

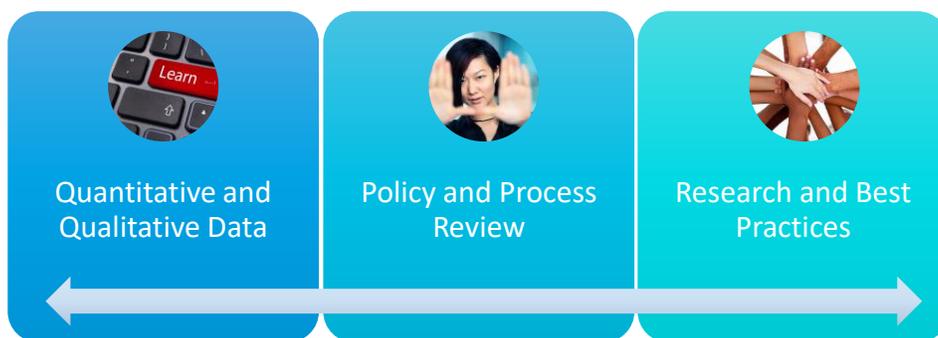
- ▶ ***understand and manage emotions***
- ▶ ***set and achieve positive goals***
- ▶ ***feel and show empathy for others***
- ▶ ***establish and maintain positive relationships***
- ▶ ***make responsible decisions.***

Our vision is that all CCSD students will thrive today, tomorrow and throughout life with a sense of purpose and self-worth.

This report offers recommendations based on the findings from months of study with a broad, districtwide committee well-equipped to tackle this important work. As the committee's work continued to unfold, the work truly challenged a traditional notion of a school's role and forced the realization of a new role based on a modern student need. To address those needs, the organization must continue to be willing to learn and grow with a commitment to keeping students central to our work.

Section II: Methodology

The Committee's work consisted of a review of internal quantitative and qualitative data, current CCSD policies and practices, and the latest research from the field. The task was to collect evidence and artifacts through multiple sources to make an informed determination of student need, identify gaps in services and create recommendations for next steps.



As portrayed in the graphic above, sample data sets and policies reviewed included, but were not limited to, the Georgia Health Survey, Panorama Ed Data, CCSD Policies, Code of Conduct, Suicide Protocol, At-Risk Data, Hospital Homebound Data, and Discipline Data, as well as National Mental Health Trends.

National Mental Health Trends

1 out of 7 children ages 2-8 are diagnosed with mental health and behavioral disorders
 16% of high schools students have thought seriously about suicide
 Average age of depression: 1978 - 29 years of age; 2018 - 14.5 year of age
 1 in 12 high school students have committed self-harm (e.g. cutting)

Multiple Sources

Research and best practices reviewed from multiple sources included, but were not limited to, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL); Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development; Edutopia; the Wallace Foundation; and the Committee for Children.

One meta-analysis from 2017 analyzed results from 82 different interventions involving more than 97,000 students from kindergarten to high school, and the effects were assessed six months to 18 years after the programs ended.

The research showed, for example, that:

- up to 3.5 years after the last intervention, the academic performance of students exposed to Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs was an average of 13 percentile points higher than their non-SEL peers.
- at other follow-up periods, conduct problems, emotional distress, and drug use were all significantly lower for students exposed to SEL programs, and development of social and emotional skills and positive attitudes toward self, others, and school was higher.

www.casel.org/2017-meta-analysis

The evidence was clear and compelling for the committee. At every turn, data, journal articles and stories from the field showed the immediate and long-term impact of intentional SEL practices on not only student's social and emotional well-being but also on their academic growth.

Section III: Guiding Framework

The Committee, after careful review, recommends that CCSD adopt the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Competencies as our framework for Social and Emotional Learning. These Five Core Competencies are integrated to promote **INTERPERSONAL**, **INTRAPERSONAL** and **COGNITIVE** skills and abilities. Additionally, each of the five competencies have clear descriptions for providing a roadmap for all students and staff.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) COMPETENCIES

SELF-AWARENESS

The ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one’s strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a “growth mindset.”

- IDENTIFYING EMOTIONS
- ACCURATE SELF-PERCEPTION
- RECOGNIZING STRENGTHS
- SELF-CONFIDENCE
- SELF-EFFICACY

SELF-MANAGEMENT

The ability to successfully 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

SOCIAL AWARENESS

The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

- PERSPECTIVE-TAKING
- EMPATHY
- APPRECIATING DIVERSITY
- RESPECT FOR OTHERS

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

- COMMUNICATION
- SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT
- RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
- TEAMWORK

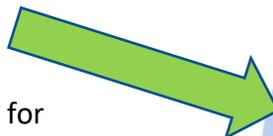
RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.

- IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS
- ANALYZING SITUATIONS
- SOLVING PROBLEMS
- EVALUATING
- REFLECTING
- ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY



Additionally, the Framework emphasizes not only the role for teachers in the classroom, but also for leaders and staff at the school level, and family and community partnerships. There is a critical role for all members of our school community.



Section IV: Recommendations

The Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations are organized into two categories. The first category represents overarching recommendations for the entire initiative. The second category contains five individual core area recommendations and corresponding action steps.

Category I: Overarching Recommendations

1. Identify a **District Lead for SEL** who can work across departments at the district level and with all schools to create a systemic plan, coordinate implementation, and monitor progress over multiple years.
2. Appoint a **District SEL Oversight Committee** representative of the district and school staff, community agencies and partners to work collaboratively in support of the district plan for SEL. The plan will impact all facets of the organization and will require coordination and long-term commitment.
3. Create **Innovation Zone Care Teams** to prioritize needs, coordinate services, provide professional development, and organize crisis response by Innovation Zone. Team members may include but are not limited to Innovation Zone Principal, District Lead Nurse, Lead Psychologist, Lead Counselor, and Social Workers, Psychologists, and Counselors within a Zone.
4. Create **School Care Teams** to identify needs, provide services, and monitor progress for students within the school. Team members may include but are not limited to the School Nurse, Counselor, Psychologist, Social Worker, ILS, Administration, and Teachers.



5. Develop **SEL Embedded Curriculum** with instructional strategies for content integration into daily lessons and resources for teachers, counselors and staff to use in support of the CASEL Competencies.
6. Provide systemic **Professional Development** for all staff and for specialized roles to ensure knowledge gaps identified are closed and the skills and abilities staff need to serve the whole child area realized.

7. Create a **SEL Resource Library** for Staff and Parents that provide resources, articles, videos, Q&A, and links to support for a variety of topics related to the wellness of students, staff and our community.
8. Identify and nurture critical **Community Partnerships** within Cherokee and surrounding counties to garner the services and support all students and their families need to thrive.

Category II: Core Area Recommendations

The recommendations focus on sensitive topics that the committee felt must be addressed both internally and externally within our community. There are opportunities for professional growth, as an organization, as well as the development of policies that support research-based practices.

Core Areas for Social Emotional Learning				
Equity and Cultural Competence	Positive Behavioral Framework	Mental Health and Suicide Prevention	Trauma-Informed Practices	Staff Well-Being and Self-Care

Equity and Cultural Competence

Recommendation: Establish systemic guidelines for developing cultural competence and leads to equity and access for all.

Action Steps:

1. Conduct a districtwide needs assessment to measure the on-going level of cultural competence and identify strengths and weaknesses of the organization as a whole, as well as within specific schools.
2. Provide, monitor and support cultural competence training for 100% of staff and students.
3. Identify consistent data sources and assessment tools used to track progress toward cultural competence.
4. Refine the locally-developed portion of the School Improvement Plan to emphasize SEL and cultural competence.

5. Develop a deeper understanding of culturally proficient pedagogy and seek resources at all levels to support a more diverse curriculum.
6. Identify avenues of community outreach and secure resources for school staff to easily communicate with students and families who speak a language other than English (translators, parent liaisons, etc.).
7. Recruit a workforce representative of the students we serve.

Positive Behavioral Framework

Recommendation: Define and implement a positive behavioral framework to change the mindset from solely punitive to one of growth and development.

Action Steps:

1. Create a districtwide committee to define the CCSD positive behavioral framework.
2. Provide professional development to support positive behaviors, growth mindsets and behavioral coaching practices.
3. Add an action code in the student information system for “behavioral coaching” in order to track support for student actions.
4. Develop examples of appropriate usage of the Positive Behavioral Framework for guidance for staff and for parents.
5. Embed the Positive Behavioral Framework in daily routines and instruction

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

Recommendation: Establish and maintain positive relationships with all students to implement measures that focus on mental wellness and prevent self-harm/suicide.

1. Prioritize counseling services and redistribute other duties that take time from direct interaction and support for students exhibiting signs of mental health issues, self-harm, or suicide ideation. *(American School Counselor Association recommends 80% or more time be direct or indirect services with students)*

2. Review the allotment of psychologist-to-student ratio to ensure we are providing an appropriate level of service to all students. (*National Association of School Psychologists recommends 1:700-900*)
3. Provide training for psychologists to provide full wrap-around services for students beyond special education compliance.
4. Provide staff awareness and training on signs and symptoms of mental illness and risk of self-harm.
5. Increase student awareness of signs to look for and actions to take if they, or one of their peers, want to harm themselves or others.
6. Develop a list of community resources and partners that provide support and services to our students and families.
7. Investigate expanding Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services to include Student Assistance Program (SAP) services.

Trauma-Informed Practices

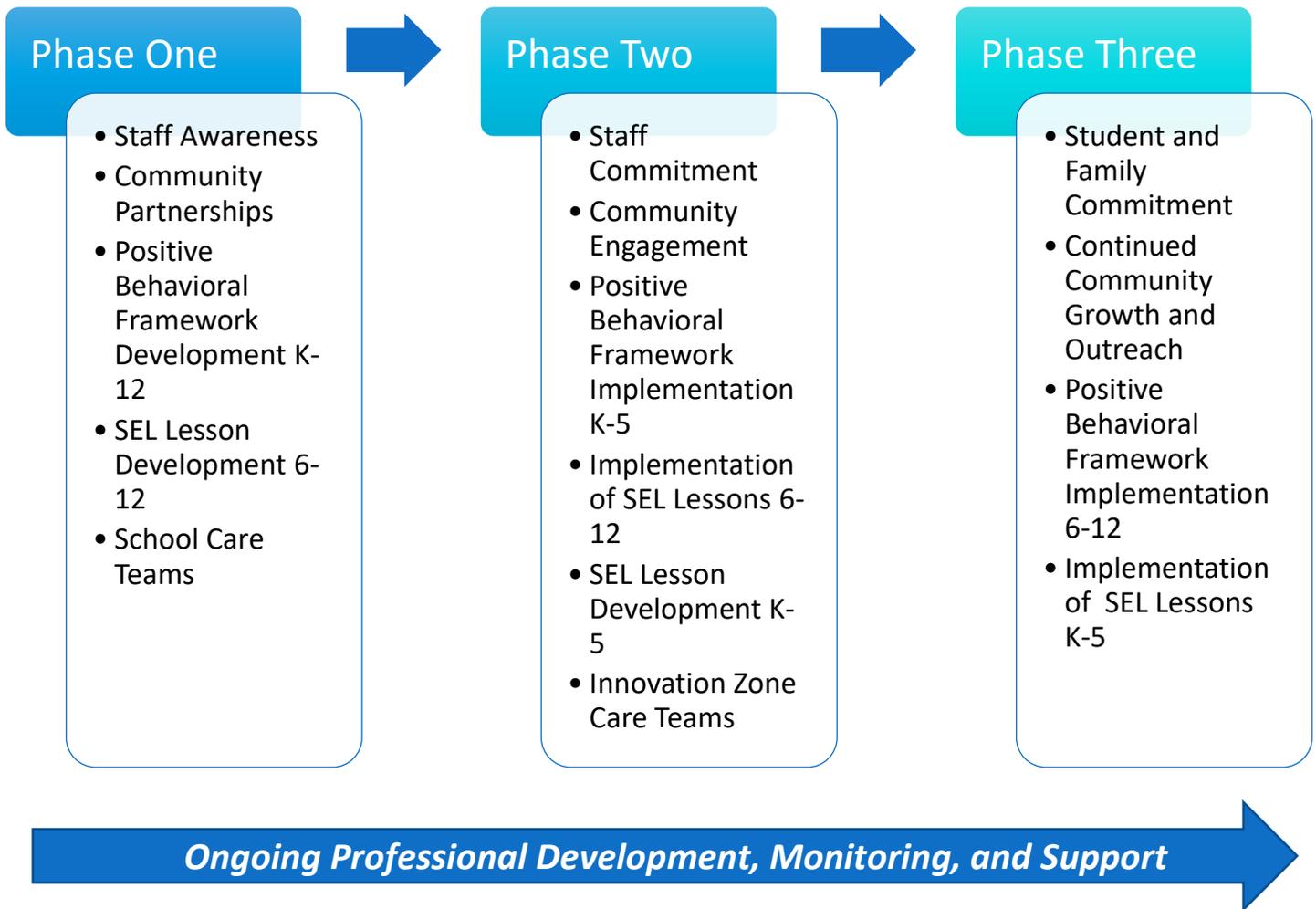
Recommendation: Build and implement strategies to embed trauma-informed practices within schools and classrooms in order to meet the individual needs of all students.

1. Investigate adding personnel highly-qualified in implementing trauma-informed practices and crisis response to coordinate Innovation Zone Care Teams.
2. Review the allotment of social worker-to-student ratio to ensure we are providing an appropriate level of service to all students. (*Georgia Department of Education recommends 1:2475*)
3. Create professional learning offerings to teach trauma-informed practices to all stakeholders.
4. Continue to incorporate SEL components into daily instructional practices.
5. Utilize data, both qualitative and quantitative, to identify at-risk students and monitor through School Care Teams.

Staff Well-Being and Self-Care

Recommendation: Promote the well-being and self-care of employees and value their contributions to our students and community.

1. Review current allocation of time and duties to ensure professional educators are maximizing time for students, support for families, collaboration time with colleagues, as well as balancing time for their own personal life.
2. Provide all employees with a menu of services offered through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
3. Promote self-care and wellness through work-based offerings (e.g., Wellness Wednesday, Mindful Moments, etc.).
4. Create an anonymous survey to determine the personal and professional needs of employees in order to best meet their needs.
5. Increase opportunities to celebrate employees for both professional and personal accomplishments.

Section V: Implementation Timeline**Section VI: Closing**

On behalf of the Committee, we are humbled by the task set forth by the Superintendent of Schools and honored to work in a school district that puts the health and well-being of Cherokee's students and staff above test scores. Our children are our future, and the way in which we respond to not only a national crisis but a health crisis that has affected our own students, speaks volumes about who we are as an organization and as a community. We are grateful for the opportunity to identify the needs of CCSD's students beyond academics and are ready to take on the heartfelt challenge of caring for the whole child.