

SEL CASE STUDY PROJECT

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Purpose of the SEL Case Study Project

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- To explore the planning and early implementation phases of SEL implementation
- Identify major accomplishments in the planning phase
- To identify obstacles & barriers to successful planning & implementation
- To provide teams with an opportunity to reflect upon & share their experiences
- To provide feedback to state funders

Why did schools apply for SEL funding?

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- ❑ To address new SEL standards
- ❑ Create a more supportive school environment
- ❑ Improve classroom management and school discipline
- ❑ Increase student interpersonal skills in a variety of areas-
address bullying
- ❑ Address School Improvement Plan
- ❑ Address critical family and community problems – poverty,
alcohol and drug problems in the high school

How did SEL Teams function?

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- Nearly all teams met monthly
- Grant requirements for team representation were generally followed
- Team Roles – Leaders, secretary, liaison to teachers, public relations (school/district/community, school climate expert, consultant, project leader)
- *“I am part of a very strong committed team. Each of us brings different strengths.”*
- *“Team work is slow – it seems like we have these great ideas and then a month later would go by and we come back and say last month we had this great idea and nothing ever really happened. Keeping momentum is a major challenge.”*

Key Findings SEL Teams

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- All SEL teams report awareness of ISBE's SEL Standards
- “We're already doing this kind of work”
- Most focused on a single school
- Issues with grant requirements
- Some schools lacked “readiness”
- Training was perceived by nearly all as beneficial

Key Findings (cont.)

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- SEL team structure and effectiveness varies from site to site (based on experience, demands, student issues)
- Administrative support is crucial
- Teacher buy-in is also crucial
- Many teams struggled with curriculum adoption versus school-wide approaches
- Wide range & variety of SEL activities planned & implemented
- Integrating multiple initiatives is a challenge for schools

SEL Training and Technical Assistance

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- Trainings provided strong foundation for SEL principles and concepts
- Two-day training was identified as the most helpful
- Some participant members “just want to be told what to do”
- Want more parent involvement and curriculum specific training
- *“We can’t say enough about the people at CASEL, the tools and training, we can call them anytime, and we have a great relationship with them”.*
- *“They held our hand every step of the way”*

SEL Coaches and Coaching

- Role of coach varied from site to site depending upon need. *“Coaches needed to meet schools where they were at”*
- Coach’s Role:
 - needs to be accessible,
 - supportive,
 - promote team ownership
 - maintain regularly scheduled meetings
 - keep team focused,
 - well connected to resources
 - experienced in the field of education
 - understand schools and communities
 - consultation skills - how to lead a group through process of change is critical
- We found the coach’s role needs greater clarity to help define expectations.

School Administrator Role

“ That is my role – to make SEL live through the school by modeling it, expecting it from everyone and celebrating each step along the way”

How administrators indicated their support for SEL programming

- SEL language in district-wide goals
 - SEL is included in school improvement plans
 - SEL is included on school-wide meeting agendas
 - Is an active member of SEL teams
 - Attends SEL trainings and events
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- Administrative turnover and school board changes create set backs for SEL- average about 5 years “SEL was put on the back burner”

Selecting an evidence-based program and practices

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- ❑ Some resistance for adopting a curriculum, especially getting school-wide support. Did not view SEL as a curriculum alone.
- ❑ High schools are particularly challenged finding an evidence-based curriculum.
- ❑ Some schools adopted school-wide practices rather than a canned curriculum. Several created a student advisory program, student leadership teams, service learning programs, etc.
- ❑ Integrated practices into classroom and school-wide practices
- ❑ Some classroom teachers resisted a new subject and/or curriculum.
- ❑ It was anticipated that getting full teacher buy-in would be a challenge for the upcoming year.

Staff reports of impact of SEL on themselves

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- “SEL has been a life changing experience.. my whole personality has changed”
- “It has changed the way I teach and plan each day. It makes my job a job I love to do and want to continue to do”
- “As a teacher, SEL makes your life easier.. You're going to get more done overall if you don't have all those behavioral issues”.

Teacher Reports of Impacts on Students

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- “They understand to communicate with each other.. It makes the day run very smoothly”
- “They’re more calm about things. They talk things out rather than fight them out”
- “Students are autonomous and self-regulating”
- “Fewer disciplinary problems, most notably fighting, decreased expulsions, fewer referrals on school buses, improved attendance”

Teacher Report of Impact on Climate

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- *“It has molded and shaped our school environment to be positive and welcoming”*
- *“It’s a lot calmer in the Junior High”*
- *“It’s not a scary hallway anymore”*
- *“How should we act in the office? How should we act in the hallways?” It’s not something that happens from 1 to 2; it’s all the time.*

Integrating SEL across PBIS, school mental health and other initiatives

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- ❑ Multiple initiatives may create competing demands for some schools and are viewed as overlapping and SEL-like.
- ❑ Using requirements of one grant to meet requirements of another grant.
- ❑ Link common language across initiatives.
- ❑ View SEL as the universal approach to RtI
- ❑ Five of 21 schools had PBIS- One person stated *“If children have a relationship with you, then PBIS works more effectively”*
- ❑ Openly discuss these initiatives with the coach

Recommendations

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- ❑ Develop a readiness assessment tool & include it as part of the RFP process
- ❑ Customize training to match school's stage of implementation and/or building type (High School Factor)
- ❑ Develop / define / clarify roles for SEL team members and coaches
- ❑ Create a system or process to identify a poor fit between a school and coach
- ❑ Develop and require an assessment and accountability system for SEL (Make it a priority)
- ❑ Develop standard presentation materials and template for schools to continuously update and promote SEL to faculty, school boards, new faculty and other critical colleagues.
- ❑ SEL, PBIS, MH Support Grants and RtI should be reviewed for better ways to integrate initiatives