EXPANDING THE DEFINITION OF STUDENT SUCCESS

Hamilton Southeastern Schools
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Learners succeed and thrive when their school environments fully support them. At Hamilton Southeastern (HSE) Schools, we are committed to educating the whole child which must include support for students’ social and emotional growth.

As a forward-thinking, world-class school district, HSE pays attention to cutting-edge research in neuroscience and cognitive psychology, including new findings on teaching and learning. Listening to the voices of leaders in colleges, communities, and careers where our students will learn, live, and work, we hear increasing demand for graduates who possess strong social-emotional skills. In fact, academic and future successes for students are tied directly to their social-emotional strengths. We also cannot ignore data indicating that children and adolescents are under higher levels of stress than in years past. Nationally, for adolescents ages 15-19, suicide is the second leading cause of death (Shain 2016) Our own student data shows multiple stressors among HSE children and teens. Providing support for social-emotional wellness is essential if we want healthy, successful graduates prepared for life beyond HSE.
WHAT RESEARCH SAYS

Studies of the brain are continuing to yield confirmation of the toxic effects stress has on learners. Stress impacts the brain’s ability to absorb, recall, and process information. “Science says to us that, in fact, the way the brain functions and grows, it needs safety, it needs warmth...” explains Stanford professor Linda Darling-Hammond. “We actually learn in a state of positive emotion much more effectively than we can learn in a state of negative emotion. That has huge implications for what we do in schools.” (Edutopia 2019).

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), “Up to eighteen years later, students exposed to SEL in school continue to do better than their peers on a number of indicators: positive social behaviors and attitudes, skills such as empathy and teamwork, and academics. And they have fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress, and lower drug use, among many other benefits. The analysis examined 82 research studies involving about 100,000 students here and abroad.” (CASEL 2019)

Similarly, a 2011 meta-analysis of 213 studies involving more than 270,000 students showed “those who participated in evidence-based SEL programs showed an 11 percentile-point gain in academic achievement compared to students who did not participate in SEL programs.... Compared to students who did not participate in SEL programs, students who participated in SEL programs also showed improved classroom behavior, an increased ability to manage stress and depression, and better attitudes about themselves, others, and school.” (CASEL 2019)

In 2016, the Aspen Institute launched the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, uniting leaders from education, research, business, health, and the military “to re-envision what constitutes success in our schools.” (Aspen Institute 2019). In January 2019, the Commission released its final report and recommendations. The Executive Summary says simply, “Children learn best when we treat them as human beings, with social and emotional as well as academic needs.” (Aspen Institute 2019). The report continues,
“More specifically, children require a broad array of skills, attitudes, character traits, and values to succeed in school, careers, and life. The promotion of social, emotional, and academic learning is not a shifting educational fad; it is the substance of education itself. It is not a distraction from the ‘real work’ of math and English instruction; it is how instruction can succeed.” (Aspen Institute 2019).

It is a mistake to label social emotional learning as a soft skill. In fact, this integrated approach strengthens rigor and serves as a booster rocket for academic performance. Consider the following from A Nation at Hope (Aspen Institute 2019):

- More than 9 in 10 parents think that schools have a role in reinforcing the development of what they typically call life skills.
- 2/3 of current and recent high school students agree that SEL would help their...learning of academic material and preparation for college, careers, and citizenship.
- 9 in 10 teachers believe social emotional skills can be taught.
- 97% of principals believe a larger focus on SEL will improve students' academic achievement.
- 8 in 10 employers say SEL skills are the most important to success and are also the hardest to find.
- SEL benefits all children, but disproportionally benefits vulnerable students who may have experienced trauma.

“Students participating in SEL programs also showed improved classroom behavior, an increased ability to manage stress and depression, and better attitudes about themselves, others, and school.”

-Durlak, Weissberg, et al-
WHAT IS SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING?

Social emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and apply skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. Social and emotional skills are often referred to as one’s emotional intelligence or EQ. These skills give youth and adults the framework to do these things:

- Cope with anger and stress
- Recognize their own and others’ emotions
- Express emotions appropriately
- Solve their own problems
- Think critically and make good decisions
- Develop effective listening and communication skills

- Handle them without violence
- Reduce power struggles and resolve conflicts constructively and collaboratively
- Give positive feedback to others
- Dialogue rather than debate with others
- Act according to their values, not their emotions
WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH

A recent U.S. Surgeon General report indicates that one in five children and adolescents will face a significant mental health condition during their school years. Supporting mental health in students can remove barriers to learning and shift focus to the success of the whole child. Hamilton Southeastern Schools defines mental health as a person’s overall emotional, psychological, and social well-being.
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS IN EDUCATION

A Nation at Hope claims "the promotion of social, emotional, and academic learning is not a shifting educational fad; it is the substance of education itself." This national report produced by the Aspen Institute identify the following six categories that accelerate efforts to impact student outcomes (Aspen Institute 2019).

1. Set a clear vision that broadens the definition of student success to prioritize the whole child. This begins by articulating the social, emotional and academic skills that graduates need for success in school, the workforce, and life.

2. Transform learning settings so they are safe and supportive for all young people. Build settings that are safe and foster bonds among children and adults.

3. Change instruction to teach students social, emotional, and cognitive skills; embed these skills in academics and school-wide practices. Intentionally teach competencies and infuse them in academic content and in all aspects of the school setting (lunchroom, hallways, extracurriculars), not just in stand alone programs or lessons.


5. Align resources and leverage partners in the community to address the whole child. Partnerships between schools, families, and the community support healthy learning and development in and out of school.

6. Forge closer connections between research and practice by shifting the paradigm for how research gets done. Bridge the divide between scholarly research and what is actionable in schools.
HSE SCHOOLS
MILESTONE 1
School Counseling and Integrated Efforts

A district team (Student Success Team) focuses solely on equity/inclusion, social-emotional learning in schools, and mental health partnerships/supports in the community.

All HSE Schools have one or more licensed school counselors on staff. School counselors provide academic advising, guidance regarding college and career readiness, and support for mental health and social emotional learning.

All school counseling programs have been awarded the Indiana Department of Education Gold Star Award for demonstrating they have “a comprehensive and accountable school counseling and guidance program, aligned to Indiana School Counselor and Student Standards, as well as national standards.”

Anti-bullying training occurs annually for all students, staff, and volunteers.

College and Career Academies opened in 2015 in both high schools with extended hours available beyond the traditional school day for counselors to meet with students and families.

In 2017, the Hamilton Southeastern School Corporation received a Comprehensive Counseling Initiative grant award from the Lilly Endowment to respond to stakeholder needs assessment with outcome based strategies impacting student success through both academic and social emotional learning achievements.
MILESTONE 2  
Community Health Partnerships

HSE has a District Mental Health and School Counseling Coordinator who coordinates services with community-based mental health organizations and oversees a partnership with Community Health Network. Additionally, she supports student led clubs, such as Bring Change to Mind.

The school district plays an integral role in the City of Fishers Stigma Free Initiative.

Student tip lines and assistance teams have been created to identify and proactively support at-risk students.

Community Health Network provides behavioral health services to students on-site in each of our schools. This effort eliminates barriers to students receiving critical support while also minimizing the impact to instructional time and missed work time for parents. Student impact from this partnership during 2018/19 includes:

- 843 students were served in 18/19 with parent permission.
- 72% of students receiving services showed mental health gains and improvement.
- 17 full time therapists were assigned to schools along with a crisis intervention specialist.
- 62% of students receiving services improved NWEA Math; 55% improved NWEA reading.
- 43% of students receiving services improved GPA.
- 74% of students receiving services showed a decrease or no change in discipline.
- 0 student suicides since 2013.
MILESTONE 3
Data, Outcomes, and Panorama Survey

During the 18/19 academic year, the Hamilton Southeastern School Board of School Trustees set a goal to become a more data-centric educational system. Data can be utilized in a variety of ways including classroom instruction, staff development, operational efficiency, and student outcomes. Two new analytics positions and a district data team were created to bring multiple, reliable, and valid data systems together and begin to provide a more holistic view of student success. Early successes include:

- Administration of Panorama Education stakeholder surveys including 89% teacher response rate, 91% student response rate, and 32% family response rate.
- Alignment of district discipline codes to enhance data mining and building level support.
- Development of corporation dashboards for real time data access and progress monitoring.
- Exploration of how to measure student success beyond standardized test and traditional methods.
WHAT IS NEXT?

SEL strategies & We Got This

Despite the progress already made, our district has committed to continued growth in the area of social-emotional learning and inclusion/equity for all students. Two important efforts are beginning in 2019 to advance student success.

The first is a pilot of intentional and integrated social emotional learning curriculum in grades K-8. After 15 months of thoughtful research with a diverse group of stakeholders, the district will be utilizing a combination of curriculum from MindUp, Second Step, and Common Sense Media. The proposed scope and sequence teaches fundamental concepts such as neuroscience, goal setting, problem solving, and disagreeing respectfully. High School planning will begin in the Fall 2019.

The second is a communication campaign, #WeGotThis, designed to work collaboratively with parents and community organization to enhance social emotional learning. This effort is not intended to communicate that we have every SEL program or support perfectly in place, but that we are strongly aware of our student’s needs and that we are prepared to respond. It is also an invitation for all adults in the community to come along side these efforts to benefit students. We need to work together with parents and our community so that every student can leave HSE for a successful future saying, "I've got this."
RESOURCES AND REFERENCES


