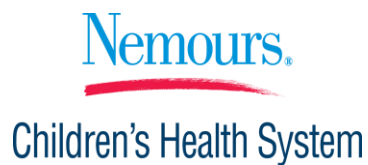




CHRISTIANA CARE
HEALTH SYSTEM



Arsht
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Fund

A Broader Vision of Student Success:

*Insights and Opportunities for Social
and Emotional Learning in Delaware*

June 8, 2018

Executive Summary



education**first**



The process of learning is inherently social and emotional

What do we mean by “social and emotional learning”?

CASEL defines social and emotional learning as “the process through which students 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, and make responsible decisions.**”¹

In schools and classrooms across the country, social and emotional learning (SEL) practices **take many forms**, ranging from **formal standalone lessons** to **integration with academics** to work on **school climate, relationship-building or social justice.**

Why is SEL important?

Research demonstrates, and educators agree, that social and emotional development is **critical to setting children up for success** in school and life.² As one Delaware principal put it, “**If we don’t meet these kids’ emotional and social needs, then all the math in the world and all the teaching from the best instructors isn’t going to matter.**”

The focus of this report

Social and emotional learning happens all the time, whether intentionally or not. This report focuses on **explicit and intentional efforts** on the part of actors across the education system to incorporate SEL into in- and out-of-school activities.

We conducted this research study to better understand SEL in Delaware and identify opportunities to improve supports for all students

Why this report

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a core part of students' education in many Delaware schools, and educators throughout the state believe deeply in the importance of this work. To advance the **quality and equity** of SEL policy and practice throughout the state, we wanted to better understand SEL practices currently in place and the areas of greatest need. We offer this report, based on our study of practices in the state and drawing on national research, to **shine a light on the current landscape of SEL** in Delaware and **help leaders, educators and partners across the state make decisions and investments** to strengthen students' social and emotional development.

Who we are



The Rodel Foundation of Delaware is dedicated to helping Delaware build one of the finest systems of public education in the world. We work with policymakers, researchers, educators, and business and community members to catalyze new ideas and drive impactful student outcomes. Rodel sponsored and oversaw this project and is grateful for the co-investment and leadership of the project's other sponsors and Steering Committee members (see slides 6–7).

Education First is a national, non-partisan, mission-driven strategy and policy organization with unique and deep expertise in education improvement. Our mission is to deliver exceptional ideas, experience-based solutions and results so all students—and particularly low-income students and students of color—are prepared for success in college, career and life. We conducted this research study, in partnership with the non-partisan Virginia-based research firm **Edge Research**, and wrote this report.



This study was sponsored by Rodel and a group of local funders...

Project Sponsors



The **Arsht-Cannon Fund** was created to preserve, support, protect, and defend the best interests of a civil society. The fund is currently focused on improving the quality of life for all Delawareans by increasing educational opportunities and access to healthcare for Hispanic Delawareans.

Christiana Care Health System, headquartered in Wilmington, Delaware, is one of the country's largest health care providers. Its mission is to serve its neighbors as a respectful, expert, caring partner in their health by creating innovative, effective, affordable systems of care that its neighbors value.



As a facilitator, information resource and manager of charitable funds, the **Delaware Community Foundation** helps communities and philanthropists focus charitable resources for the greatest community benefit statewide.

Nemours Children's Health Care System is committed to improving the health of children. Its mission is to provide leadership, institutions, and services to restore and improve the health of children through care and programs not readily available, with one high standard of quality and distinction, regardless of the recipient's financial status.



...and informed by a steering committee of practitioners and experts from across the state of Delaware

Steering Committee

- **Madeleine Bayard**, Senior Vice President, Rodel Foundation of Delaware
- **Dana Beckton**, Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Christiana Care
- **Debby Boyer**, Director of K–12 Education and Delaware PBS Co-Project Director
- **Chris Cannon**, Executive Director, Arsht-Cannon Fund
- **Rachel Donaldson**, Social Emotional Learning Coordinator, Woodbridge School District
- **Dorrell Green**, Director of Innovation and Improvement, Delaware Department of Education
- **Sarah Grunewald**, Vice President of Community Engagement and Programs, Delaware Community Foundation
- **Eliza Hirst**, Deputy Child Advocate, Office of the Child Advocate
- **Meghan Lines**, Staff Psychologist, Department of Pediatric Behavioral Health, Nemours
- **Leslie Newman**, CEO, Children & Families First
- **Felicia Wennell**, Co-Head of School for Academic Support, Freire Charter School Wilmington

Through our research, we aimed to answer five high-level questions about SEL implementation in Delaware

1

What is the range of programs, interventions, measurement tools and policies to support SEL currently in use?

2

What is the range of implementation of SEL programs/interventions?

3

What and where are there major gaps in SEL implementation? Who is addressing these gaps?

4

How are schools and districts attempting to implement SEL with a focus on equity?

5

What resources and tools do schools, districts and their partners need to implement SEL and mitigate common challenges so that all students in Delaware develop the SEL skills they need to succeed?

To answer these questions, we administered surveys, conducted interviews and visited schools across the state

SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEADER SURVEYS



To get a broad sense of what SEL implementation looks like, we surveyed school and district leaders. We administered the survey statewide and received 55 responses.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH EDUCATORS AND SEL PARTNERS



We followed up by conducting interviews with more than 30 school and district leaders, SEL partners (in- and out-of-school-time service providers) and representatives from other community organizations that provide SEL supports.

SCHOOL AND DISTRICT SITE VISITS



To get a closer look at SEL implementation across the state, we spent time in schools, where we observed instruction in classrooms and spoke with students, parents, teachers, school and district leaders, and community partners.

This report reflects data collected and visits to schools in **all three Delaware counties**; **all grade levels**; and **district, vo-tech and charter** schools. Our study focused primarily on schools that serve **higher-than-average populations of students of color**, students from **low-income households** and **English learners**. We also conducted **desk research** to supplement our findings. **Unless cited otherwise, all findings in this report are from our surveys, interviews and/or site visits.**

We organized the findings from our research into six key themes

Theme

Findings

EQUITY

- Delaware students of color face **significant achievement, discipline and access gaps**.
- Delaware educators are **committed to meeting the needs of all students**.
- But there are **risks** associated with implementing SEL without an **explicit and intentional** racial equity lens.

SHARED LEADERSHIP

- Schools are using resources from a **variety** of different SEL programs, frameworks and approaches.
- **Teachers frequently play a leadership role in SEL efforts**, supported by school and district leaders.
- Educators are eager for **support and statewide coherence**, but are wary of the potential for overreach.

COLLABORATION

- Educators and community partners value opportunities to **work together to support kids**.
- Promising **examples of collaboration abound** across the state, but more are needed.
- In particular, educators point to a statewide need for **additional social services**, including in mental health.

CAPACITY

- Schools and districts have experienced success by leading with **adult SEL skill development**.
- Schools with strong SEL programs **are implementing incrementally** with targeted goals.
- Still, educators and staff **need additional training** on how to implement SEL in the classroom.

ENGAGEMENT

- Family and student engagement is **critical to the success of SEL implementation**.
- Many schools and districts **struggle** with this work or have **not yet made it a priority**.
- SEL partners are helping to **bridge the gap** and engage families and students.

BALANCED MEASUREMENT

- Most schools currently use **“proxy data”** to gauge effectiveness of SEL efforts.
- Educators **value the ability to track SEL progress**, and some are eager for more targeted measures.
- Educators and experts in Delaware and across the country **urge caution** when measuring SEL.

This circle, with equity at the center, demonstrates the interconnectedness of our findings



The circle also demonstrates the connections across our recommendations

Balanced Measurement Recommendation

Support schools to prioritize SEL and measure it meaningfully, but stay away from mandating assessments or attaching “stakes.”

Example: Help schools set explicit, concrete goals for SEL implementation

Equity Recommendation

Move from working to meet all students’ needs to explicitly implementing SEL *for* equity.

Example: Advocate for discipline policies that minimize the time students are removed from the classroom

Shared Leadership Recommendation

Develop system-level coherence while maintaining a commitment to local flexibility and opportunities for school and teacher leadership.

Example: Develop culturally responsive competencies for SEL in Delaware

Engagement Recommendation

Engage students and families in the design, planning, rollout and evaluation of SEL initiatives and help families develop their own SEL skills.

Example: Be willing to work alongside families and students, rather than providing them with “the answers”



Capacity Recommendation

Prioritize SEL learning opportunities for teacher candidates, teachers, school leaders and other school-based staff.

Example: Create a cadre of SEL teacher leaders

Collaboration Recommendation

Facilitate coordination and knowledge sharing within and across schools, districts, states and sectors.

Example: Encourage school leaders to create and use “asset maps” of community organizations

A broader vision: The recommendations in this report are intended to bring Delaware to a place where *all* students receive the social, emotional and academic supports they need



EQUITY

- Teachers understand **implicit bias, dominant culture norms, cultural competency and asset-based approaches**, and incorporate these learnings into their instruction
- All students **receive the support they need** to succeed socially, emotionally and academically

SHARED LEADERSHIP

- Educators have a **shared understanding of what SEL is** and the SEL competencies students need
- Educators have **flexibility to choose SEL approaches** that work for their students, with support
- Schools are designed or have evolved so that **SEL is not an add-on but a common thread** in students' learning

COLLABORATION

- Educators **share SEL knowledge, resources and best practices**
- Community partners, employers and schools** ensure students have the **SEL skills needed for college and careers**
- Health care providers and schools work together to **meet students' mental health needs**

CAPACITY

- Educators understand how to teach **standalone SEL lessons and integrate SEL into academics**; all school staff **create learning environments where students thrive**
- Teacher and principal **preparation programs incorporate SEL**
- Educators receive **ongoing professional learning about SEL**

ENGAGEMENT

- Families, students and communities are **viewed as assets**, and are proactively engaged to **co-design, plan, roll out and evaluate** schools' SEL initiatives
- Schools address families' SEL needs** alongside those of their students

BALANCED MEASUREMENT

- Schools and districts have access to helpful **tools and data** to understand their students' social and emotional development and **use that data to improve SEL strategies**
- District and state leaders **encourage schools to prioritize SEL** but refrain from **issuing mandates or attaching "stakes"** to SEL outcomes

Other states can learn from these four overarching themes that emerged from Delaware's pioneering efforts to understand and deepen its SEL practices



Keep equity at the center

- Schools must become deeply inclusive communities in which educators understand and affirm families' backgrounds and cultural heritage
- Educators must acknowledge and address the impact of racism, privilege and implicit bias in education



Listen to communities, build on existing assets

- Engaging students, parents, educators, and community partners led us to nuanced insights
- Our recommendations build on Delaware's promising practices and respond to stakeholders' lived experiences



Harness the power of collaboration

- Working together, policy makers, schools and community organizations can develop a more holistic understanding of students and their families, for a greater collective impact
- Deepening Delaware's connections between education and healthcare is particularly important



SEL is more than a program

- Evidence-based SEL frameworks and curricula are useful resources for schools, but SEL is more than just a program: SEL in schools is happening all the time
- *All* adults in schools are responsible for creating a learning environment that allows *all* students to feel safe and successful

Contact us to learn more



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Thank you!
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