

Washington SEL Professional Learning Network Peer-to-Peer Learning Series: Integrating Social Emotional Learning Within Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

Session Summary

The [Washington SEL Professional Learning Network](#) provides Washington state education professionals with social emotional learning (SEL)–related learning opportunities to support local education agencies (LEAs) around the state in building the conditions, supports, and community partnerships that allow students to develop and apply social-emotional skills. This Peer-to-Peer Learning Series brought 10 LEA teams together to discuss and troubleshoot their efforts to integrate SEL within Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) in the learning environment. To begin the series, LEAs received one-on-one coaching to discuss their team’s unique needs. During the series, LEA teams convened for two whole-group sessions during which they explored best practices for integrating SEL within MTSS, reflected on their current SEL and MTSS integration practices, and connected with peers to collaboratively build action plans. The sessions ended with participants discussing their confidence in integrating SEL within MTSS and their aspirations to continue connecting with LEA teams as they address their SEL integration challenges. The series concluded in a final one-on-one coaching session during which LEA teams further refined their action plans for integrating SEL and MTSS.

Common Challenges and Potential Strategies

The most common challenges that LEA teams shared were (a) creating and communicating a clear vision for integrating SEL within MTSS, (b) building the capacity of adults who support students, and (c) using data to help drive implementation and integration efforts.

Creating and Communicating a Clear Vision for Integrating SEL Within MTSS

A vision statement with clear goals can serve as a powerful, shared sense of the importance of SEL implementation. Having a vision statement also helps generate commitment to SEL throughout the system. Districts shared that building a clear vision for SEL within MTSS is essential because a need exists for clarity on how SEL, MTSS, and additional student support frameworks fit and work together. Educators are overwhelmed, feeling as if they have to implement too many initiatives while simultaneously feeling pressure for students to perform academically. To build a clear and effective vision, LEAs need to co-create the vision with their staff, staff need to learn about the supports available to them, and there must be opportunities



for staff to see models of how this integrated approach works to support student well-being and academic progress.

Peer LEAs identified several potential strategies to address this challenge area, such as (a) creating strategic plans for the district, (b) communicating a clear vision and developing a shared understanding, and (c) providing accessible professional learning for all educators.

The following resources can support additional learning and action planning.

Resource	Author	Connections to the challenge area
<u>MTSS Components and Resources</u>	Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)	Provides information on the essential components of MTSS and supplies resources that will assist in using these core components.
<u>Integrating Social and Emotional Learning Within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports to Advance Equity: SEL MTSS Toolkit for State and District Leaders</u>	American Institutes for Research® (AIR®)	The Council of Chief State School Officers; the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL); and AIR developed this toolkit to support state and district leaders who are interested in engaging in the work of integrating equity-focused SEL into an MTSS. Incorporating lessons learned from leading states, practical guidance, and adaptable templates, this toolkit addresses five key questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do we mean by SEL, MTSS, and equity? 2. Why integrate SEL into MTSS? 3. What does SEL integrated into MTSS look like? 4. How can state and district leaders get started? 5. Where do we go from here?
<u>School Climate and Social and Emotional Learning: The Integration of Two Approaches</u>	AIR	This brief reviews research on how positive school climates support SEL and how improved SEL contributes to improved school climate in elementary and secondary schools.
<u>Guide to Schoolwide SEL: Foster a Supportive School Climate</u>	CASEL	Provides guidance and resources for intentionally cultivating a supportive school climate.

Building Adult Capacity

Building adult capacity is an essential element of SEL implementation. Districts shared that building adult capacity is a challenge because (a) they are unsure of where to begin and (b) professional learning is not accessible to all educators. Staff need opportunities to learn about supports available to them and understand how and when to deliver SEL instruction. To effectively build adult capacity, there needs to be a strong leadership team that can implement SEL and provide staff with a comprehensive implementation plan.

Peer LEAs identified several potential strategies to address this challenge area. These strategies include (a) having an instructional leadership team, (b) developing protocols for sharing information, (c) providing bite-sized professional learning for integration into existing meetings, and (d) giving time to teachers and community members to think about what SEL is.

The following resources can support additional learning and action planning.

Resource	Author	Connections to the challenge area
SEL Online Module Segment 2: Embedding SEL Schoolwide	OSPI	Segment 2 explores the various ways in which SEL can be thoroughly embedded within the functioning of schools. This segment also helps educators align SEL with other initiatives and describes the actions that administrators can take to embed SEL within the core functioning of the school.
SEL Online Module Segment 3: Creating a Professional Culture Based on SEL	OSPI	Segment 3 provides information about adult SEL, including ways to support school staff and how to engage families with SEL efforts. This segment also addresses ways in which an educator's implicit bias influences interactions with students and colleagues.
Guide to Schoolwide SEL: Create a Representative SEL Team to Lead Implementation	CASEL	This section of the schoolwide Implementation Guide outlines the process for recruiting, forming, and sustaining an SEL leadership team to manage the SEL planning and implementation process for the school.
Guide to Schoolwide SEL: Engage All Stakeholders in Foundational Learning	CASEL	This resource provides support for schools as they develop communication strategies to keep stakeholders engaged and excited about SEL implementation. The section on foundational learning also has some helpful resources for communicating the "big ideas" behind SEL, including a sample introductory presentation and a list of supporting research.

Using Data to Drive Integration

Districts and schools should collect the data they need to best understand how SEL efforts are being implemented and the outcomes of those efforts. Districts shared that using data to drive integration is a challenge because they have been unable to determine how to effectively use the data. Districts want to focus on not only collecting data but also really using it to inform their practices. Inquiry-based approaches are best for gathering purposeful data about a question, analyzing and reflecting on the data, and implementing plans of action. For SEL and MTSS, it is important to first build a data culture that supports focusing on identifying what adults can do differently and what shifts are possible in the system or school environment to better support students, rather than first focusing on the student.

Peer LEAs identified several potential strategies to address this challenge area, including empathy surveys and focus groups, districtwide assessments, and having a defined survey goal.

The following resources can support additional learning and action planning.

Resource	Author	Connections to the challenge area
Assessment Guide	CASEL	This guide provides several resources for practitioners to select and use measures of student SEL, including guidance on how to select an assessment and use student SEL data, a catalog of SEL assessments equipped with filters and bookmarking, and real-world accounts of how practitioners are using SEL assessments.
Investing in Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning	Wallace Foundation and the RAND Corporation	With new flexibility under the Every Student Succeeds Act to use federal funds to support SEL, evidence-based SEL interventions have gained salience. This research report provides guidance to educators on how to assess local SEL needs and how to identify evidence-based interventions to address those needs. It also gives recommendations on how to implement, monitor, and evaluate these interventions.
Are You Ready to Assess Social and Emotional Development? (Second Edition)	AIR	This toolkit includes a brief, a decision tree, and a tools index to help decide whether and how to assess social-emotional development. It also highlights the importance of implementation readiness and the conditions that foster SEL and development.
RAND Education Assessment Finder	RAND Corporation	This web-based tool allows practitioners to search for assessment measures of SEL outcomes. Practitioners, researchers, and policymakers can use it to explore what assessments are available, what they are designed to measure, how they are administered, what demands they place on students and teachers, and what kinds of uses their scores support.