

A background image showing a group of diverse children smiling and looking towards the camera. The image is slightly blurred and has a blue tint, serving as a backdrop for the title text.

exSEL Network Orientation Packet *2018 – 2019*



Dear exSEL Network Members,

Welcome to the 2018-2019 exSEL Network! Like us, you know success in school and in life depends on more than academic ability alone. Research shows social-emotional skills have a significant impact on students' academic performance and persistence in school, as well as their lifelong health, wealth, and well-being. When students strengthen their social-emotional skills, they increase their college and career readiness and are better equipped to cope with anxiety, navigate bullying situations, and avoid substance abuse. But we also know making social-emotional learning (SEL) part of everyday learning isn't easy.

You're not alone in this challenge. Districts across the state are facing the same obstacles. By coming together we can multiply our ideas, expertise, and resources. This year, you will join 18 other districts to learn about the power of SEL and discover strategies to integrate SEL into your schools. You will benefit from one another's experiences, coming together as a network to share successful practices and work together toward common goals.

By joining this network, your district has committed to making SEL a priority. We are honored to work with you in this important endeavor and look forward to helping you make SEL a part of every lesson for every student.

Sincerely,

Chad d'Entremont
Executive Director
Rennie Center for Education
Research & Policy

Sara Krachman
Executive Director
Transforming Education

What is the exSEL Network?

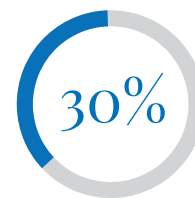
In 2016, the statewide associations of Massachusetts elementary and secondary principals, superintendents, school committees, and educational collaboratives came together to form a first-of-its-kind collaboration to advocate for social-emotional learning in schools. The next year this coalition, called Excellence through Social Emotional Learning (exSEL), partnered with the Rennie Center and Transforming Education to launch a network of nine Massachusetts school districts aimed at finding ways to enhance SEL in their classrooms.

This year, the network has grown to include 19 school districts from across the state (see details on page 5). The districts will work together to gain critical insight on strategies to support the development of social-emotional skills through changes in policy and practice at the district, school, and classroom levels. Participants will increase their understanding of SEL, build their capacity to use actionable data to assess and guide the development of students' social-emotional skills, and become part of a community where educators can learn from one another and support each other's systemic and practice shifts.

Some districts have also chosen to engage in deeper data analysis, using existing academic and behavioral indicators to guide their SEL efforts while developing new and effective strategies for tracking and measuring student progress.

By the end of the year we expect all districts to have a clear understanding of core SEL skills and knowledge of classroom-, school-, and district-level strategies to support the development of these skills. We also expect districts to identify key short- and long-term action steps to begin making their visions for SEL a reality.

WHY SEL?



Workforce Readiness

30% of employers believe college graduates lack the skills their businesses need, like goal setting, cooperation & awareness.



Student Achievement

SEL leads to better academic performance, higher college retention rates & increased employment.



Health & Wellbeing

SEL is linked to lower levels of aggression, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, obesity and criminal activity.



Return on Investment

Estimates suggest an average return of \$11 for every \$1 invested in effective school-based SEL programs.



exSEL Coalition

A statewide coalition of educators dedicated to expanding social-emotional learning whose members include the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives, and Massachusetts School Administrators Association.



The Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy

The Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy's mission is to improve public education through well-informed decision-making based on deep knowledge and evidence of effective policymaking and practice. As Massachusetts' preeminent voice in public education reform, we create open spaces for educators and policymakers to consider evidence, discuss cutting-edge issues, and develop new approaches to advance student learning and achievement. Through our staunch commitment to independent, non-partisan research and constructive conversations, we work to promote an education system that provides every child with the opportunity to be successful in school and in life.



Transforming Education

Transforming Education ("TransformEd")'s mission is to support educators and education systems in equipping students with the mindsets, essential skills, and habits they need to succeed in college, career, and life. Over the past five years, TransformEd has partnered with schools and districts serving over one million students in twenty U.S. states to directly support practitioners in their efforts to implement, integrate, and sustain evidence-based and research-informed practices focused on the development of students' social-emotional competencies and the learning environments that foster them. TransformEd's work is grounded in compelling, longitudinal research on the importance of social-emotional competencies and the learning environments that foster them, and informed by our on-the-ground experience, including as the lead strategic advisor on social-emotional learning (SEL) to California's CORE Districts, the facilitator of the Boston Charter Research Collaborative, and a lead SEL technical assistance provider to schools and school districts nationwide.

MEET THE DISTRICTS

North/West Cohort

Blackstone-Millville Regional School District
Grafton Public Schools
Fitchburg Public Schools
Lowell Public Schools
Millbury Public Schools
Mendon-Upton Regional School District
North Andover Public Schools
Shawsheen Regional Technical School
Shrewsbury Public Schools
Tantasqua Regional School District

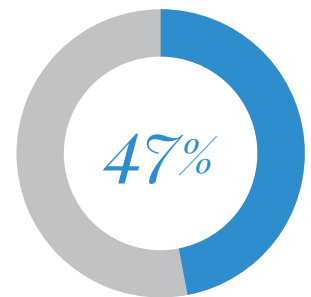
South Cohort

Attleboro Public Schools
Bridgewater-Raynham Regional School District
Brockton Public Schools
Brookline Public Schools
Marshfield Public Schools
Monomoy Regional School District
Norton Public Schools
Weymouth Public Schools
Whitman-Hanson Regional School District

EXSEL NETWORK DISTRICTS SERVE:

97,000
STUDENTS

6,700
TEACHERS



High Need Students

47% of students served by districts in the 2018-19 exSEL network are considered high need students. This includes students with disabilities, English language learners (ELL) and former ELL students, and low income students.

The Power of Networks

Too often, educators tend to tackle problems in isolation, whether in an individual classroom, school, or district. But when we come together to address challenges, we multiply our ideas, expertise, resources, and knowledge.

The members of this network share a common goal of expanding social-emotional learning in schools. By working together, you'll learn from a wide range of experiences from districts across the state. You will gain insight into key successes and lessons learned when implementing SEL strategies in diverse contexts, for different types of students and working with a wide range of available resources.

Network Year-Long Outcomes

Increase knowledge of SEL policy and practices

- What is SEL?
- Why is it important?
- How do we apply it?
- How do we know our efforts are working?

Increase capacity to apply SEL knowledge

- Was there any change to practice?
- Was there any change to systems?
- Was there any change in resource allocation?

Establish an impactful network

- What did districts learn from each other's efforts to implement SEL strategies?
- Do you have a sense of shared SEL purpose and outcomes?
- What have we learned that can inform state policy?

Meeting Location

Devens Commons Center
One Andrews Pkwy, Devens, MA 01434

Meeting Dates/Times

Sept 28, Nov 15, Jan 31, March 28
9:00 am - 3:30 pm

SESSION 1



SEPT
28

Empowered Students

How do we empower students to be agents of change in their own learning, in their school community, and in their lives?

Topics: Agency, self-awareness, engagement

SESSION 2



NOV
15

Strong Community

How do we create a safe and supportive school community in which students and adults have healthy relationships and feel a strong sense of belonging?

Topics: Relationships, sense of belonging, social awareness

SESSION 3



JAN
31

Positive Mindsets

How do we foster mindsets that help students embrace new challenges, persevere despite failures, and feel confident in their ability to achieve their goals?

Topics: Growth mindset, self-efficacy, perseverance

SESSION 4



MAR
28

Mindful Regulation

How do we support students to be mindful learners who can confidently manage stress, set and work toward goals, and delay gratification?

Topics: Self-management, self-regulation, mindfulness



Statewide Social-Emotional Learning Summit

SESSION 5

**MAY
2019**

(DATE & VENUE TBD)

This spring we will gather together with educators both in and out of the exSEL network to further our learning and share what we have accomplished as a network throughout the year. The day will include skill-building workshops and the opportunity to highlight the progress your districts have made toward expanding SEL.

More details on the date, time, and location will be announced soon.