District 23 – Social Emotional Learning Curriculum Development 2014

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Purpose of the Social Emotional Learning Curriculum Committee:
The State of Illinois' Children's Mental Health Act of 2003 stipulates that "every Illinois school District shall develop a policy for incorporating social and emotional development into the district's educational program. The policy shall address teaching and assessing social and emotional skills and protocols for responding to children with social, emotional, or mental health problems that impact learning ability." Further, legislative action and initiatives continue to provide new curricular challenges to school districts to address drug and alcohol prevention, bullying prevention, violence and relationships. In 2004, the Illinois State Board of Education articulated three learning points in the Illinois Learning Standards for Social/Emotional Learning:

1) Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
2) Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
3) Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

The committee of administration and teachers worked collaboratively during the 2013-14 school year to evaluate current curriculum goals and materials, identify gaps, and envision the future of Social and Emotional Learning programs. The standards, technologies, materials, faculty, and students are variables in the equation, thus making this a continuous improvement process. This document is a starting point for curriculum planning, collaborative lesson development, and for articulation of the changing roles and function of these areas in our district.

During a time in education where standardized test scores and "Core Curriculum" drive much of the conversation, this committee reaffirmed the importance of supporting the social and emotional development of students. We believe that in order to help all students learn and grow academically, we must foster their intrapersonal and interpersonal skills and support mental and emotional well being.

This committee of professionals is commended for their time and dedication to reflecting, creating, and writing this update to the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum in Prospect Heights School District 23.

Visions and Values:
We believe that it is our shared responsibility to create a supportive and nurturing environment in which students feel safe to learn and grow. In order for students to become well-rounded, successful individuals, we must equally address social, emotional, and academic needs of our students by enhancing their abilities to develop self-awareness and self-management skills.

Students who demonstrate positive decision-making will experience greater success in school, establish more rewarding and enriching relationships, and build life-long skills. As educators, therefore, it is our shared responsibility to model and teach these skills to assist students in becoming socially and emotionally healthy, productive members of society. Further, we support deepening an appreciation for diversity, creating a sense of social responsibility to help those in need throughout the world and to understand their role in the reciprocal relationship within the surrounding communities.

In the 21st Century, these relationships take on a wide variety of forms including digital, virtual, and physical. Digital citizenship and responsible use of technology are also components of a well-rounded education for our students. We believe that students need to learn how to be safe, responsible, and ethical consumers and producers of media and content.

Lastly, we believe that we have a shared responsibility to protect vulnerable students from bullying behaviors, redirect and remediate students whose emotional state leads them to bully others, and empower bystanders to be resilient and supportive friends to help create a safe and positive learning environment. As educators we believe that creating a proactive, positive, and encouraging school community will enhance our abilities to minimize negative behaviors and support students in making positive choices.

Instructional Goals/Student Skills:

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is the nationally recognized authority in SEL curriculum, policy, and advocacy. They have identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective and behavioral competencies that SEL curriculum target for instruction and ongoing support. The definitions of the five competency clusters for students are:

- **Self-awareness:** The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.
- **Self-management:** The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward

achieving personal and academic goals.

- **Social awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
- **Relationship skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.
- **Responsible decision making:** The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

These competencies serve as the focus and goal of all SEL curriculum and programming. To effectively embed social and emotional learning opportunities across all settings, four broad areas of curriculum development have been identified.

1) School-wide behavioral expectations and positive reinforcement
2) Specific skill instruction in the five competencies
3) Digital citizenship and responsibility
4) Bullying prevention

Curriculum scope and sequence have been developed for each of these areas with associated curriculum materials provided to support faculty with implementation and fidelity of instruction.

School-wide behavioral expectations and positive reinforcement:
District 23 has employed a model of school-wide expectations based upon the theory and framework of positive behavior systems. Expectations are clearly identified and articulated to students at all grade levels through direct instruction, modeling, and common language. Student behavior is monitored based on meeting expectations with associated consequences and re-teaching used when students do not meet expectations. Similarly, positive reinforcement methods are employed to reward and recognizes students for maintaining a positive, safe, respectful and responsible environment.

Specific skill instruction in the five competencies:

Social Thinking (2012) curriculum is used as the foundation for direct instruction lessons in specific skill competencies. Through this common language and consistent approach, students learn how to identify their own perceptions of their own and others emotions and behaviors by reading verbal and social cues. Students identify their reaction to a wide variety of situations and determine how to best navigate social relationships. When viewed through the lens of social thinking, all decision-making is a component of social relationships that either result in positive or negative responses. Students develop a sense of how they feel about themselves, how they believe others view them, and how they view others through the lens of relationships and sequences of choices. It is our shared responsibility to assist students in appropriately reading social cues, identifying and expressing their own emotions, and understanding how their behavior impacts those around them.

Digital citizenship and responsibility:

As technology and social media play ever increasing and ubiquitous roles in our schools, our notion of citizenship and appropriate social interaction must also develop to fit these new (and yet defined) methods of interaction. Digital citizenship and digital literacy skills are interconnected and must be fully integrated into the education process. Common Sense Media provides schools with curriculum and materials to use as a foundation for direct instruction in the areas of personal safety, privacy, relationships and communication, ethical behavior, and cyberbullying.

Bullying prevention:

Bullying prevention requires four strands of curriculum to effectively reach and teach all students. Systems must employ consistent language and clear expectations for safe behavior that does not allow for harassment, including physical and verbal bullying. Schools must address the immediate needs of the bullied student by responding immediately to inappropriate behavior and providing supporting coaching to enhance skills. Next, schools must directly address the negative behavior of the bully, while also identifying causal factors for remediation and/or treatment. Lastly, schools must support the positive efforts of bystanders to resist and prevent bullying situations from occurring, as well as developing the strength of character and confidence to stand up to what they know is not right. Within the framework of our school-wide behavior system, the Expect Respect curriculum provides the framework and instructional model required to address these four strands.

Resources:
Common Sense Media
http://www.commonsensemedia.org/
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
http://www.casel.org/
Illinois Learning Standards for Social/Emotional Learning
http://www.isbe.net/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm
Expect Respect/Bullying prevention in PBIS schools
http://www.pbisillinois.org/curriculum/bullying
Social Thinking
https://www.socialthinking.com/