THE AASA LEADERSHIP NETWORK

Social-Emotional Learning in Action

A Case Study of Andover Public Schools, Andover, Massachusetts

Complete Case Study and
Professional Development Guide

AASA, The School Superintendents Association,
and the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is the great connecting thread in public education. AASA strongly supports the principle of ensuring that all schools and districts have a culture that provides engaging, inviting, safe, orderly, and efficacious learning environments for all students. Now more than ever, SEL is the heart of educational transformation—and it must be a sustainable component of all school reform and transformation efforts.

In partnership with the Chan Zuckerberg Institute (CZI), AASA, the School Superintendents Association, is committed to supporting district leaders in their work with staff to integrate Social Emotional Learning strategies within their respective learning organizations. This first in a series of SEL case studies showcases the SEL implementation process and its current status in Andover Public Schools, Andover, Massachusetts. Under Superintendent Dr. Sheldon Berman's leadership, the district has sustained a multi-year commitment to SEL, including a deep commitment to building a collaborative organizational culture that is safe, engaging, and inviting for all members of its learning organization.

Andover Public Schools successfully represents universal attributes related to SEL that must be part of every learning organization—but are frequently missing or underrepresented as a result of inappropriate practices involving mechanical test preparation, impersonal data analysis, and antiquated industrial models of organizational practice. In Andover Public Schools, SEL is at the core of the learning process—and is the essential building block that provides the armature for that district's approach to education and sustainable student achievement.

This case study is part of a collaborative initiative (in partnership with the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative) and illustrates how AASA will engage in thoughtful and strategic scaling of our current work that will provide superintendents with content and understandings to experience a learning continuum from initial non-awareness to awareness/

understanding to sustained organizational support of various comprehensive student development (CSD) domains. Specifically, we believe that case studies such as the Andover Public Schools study presented here contribute significantly to the research base underlying SEL implementation. Andover models best practices identified in current social-emotional learning research as well as leadership competencies proven effective in sustaining positive, engaging, supportive, and inviting learning environments and organization development.

This Andover Public Schools SEL case study was developed using the following structural components:

1. Five "virtual" on-site visits, each of which addressed an identified set of research questions focusing on a key component of SEL implementation:

   - June 2, 2020: Central Office Leadership
   - June 9, 2020: School-Based Administrators
   - June 16, 2020: The Teacher Perspective (Elementary, Middle, High)
   - June 23, 2020: State Leadership and SEL
   - July 2020: The Superintendent's Perspective

2. Analysis of patterns, themes, and consensus-driven recommendations concerning the SEL implementation process

3. Development of a district-level profile using current demographic data and district-generated documentation (including website materials and the "Andover Public Schools: Success in Social Emotional Learning" synthesis document)

4. Organization of the case study to include highlights, recommendations, staff and school profiles, and insights

5. Presentation of implications and recommendations for district leaders and their staff as they collaborate on SEL implementation

A NOTE TO
OUR READERS

This professional development guide includes the complete case study of Andover Public Schools and its SEL implementation process. It is designed as a resource for use by educational leaders working with staff to understand how SEL can become an integral and sustainable component of a school district's organizational culture.

This version of the case study includes a complete analysis of educational leadership and SEL from the vantage point of the superintendent, central office leaders, school-based administrators, teachers, and Michigan state representatives.

This case study also includes highlight summaries, reflective questionnaires, and a culminating synthesis of recommendations for use by study groups, action research teams, and Communities of Practice. For these groups, this comprehensive case study can be a useful study guide supporting a and comprehensive professional development process for systemic implementation of social-emotional learning.

AN INTRODUCTION TO ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS, MASSACHUSETTS

Andover Public Schools is recognized as one of the highest performing districts in the state of Massachusetts. In the 2019-20 school year, had a total enrollment of 5,944 students. The district has one preschool, five K-5 elementary schools, three 6-8 middle schools, and one senior high school.

According to its website, Andover is "a district dedicated to providing creative and quality instruction that educates the whole child so that students are prepared for success in college, career and life. We are a district known for academic rigor and excellence in arts and athletics." Current student performance data confirm the district's commitment to student engagement, rigor, and excellence, including:

- 95% of Andover graduates are college-bound.

- Over the last 10 years, more than 33% of Andover High School students were admitted to the most selective colleges and universities in the country; 75% were admitted to very selective institutions.

- The district averages a 13/1 student-staff ratio, one of the lowest in the state when compared to similar districts.

- During the past 10 years, nearly 90% of Andover High School graduates were still enrolled in higher education institutions within 16 months of graduation.

- Graduation rates average 96%, ranked highly in the state of Massachusetts.

- The district has 141 Advanced Placement Scholars. In addition, the district administered 791 AP Exams with an average score of 3.97 out of 5.

The district's articulated core values include a commitment to high achievement for all, teaching excellence, collaboration, innovation, respect, and responsibility. Its articulated "Statements of Beliefs" reinforce these values:

- All students can learn and reach their potential.

- Children learn where they live.

- Schools and community work together to prepare students to contribute positively to a democratic society and world community.

- Learning is a continuum that occurs inside and outside school and takes many forms.

- Clearly defined standards, benchmarks, and performance expectations promote success.

- Each student should be prepared to contribute to an increasingly multi-faceted, multi-cultural society and workplace.

- School staff are leaders and innovators in education and are positive role models.

- School programs must be flexible.

- Services and programs should be designed for the benefit of the learners, not the convenience of the providers.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS FOR THE AASA ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS VIRTUAL CASE STUDY

JUNE 2, 2020

Central Office Leadership: Dr. Sheldon Berman, Superintendent of Schools, and representatives from his central office staff shared insights in response to the following essential questions involving system-level coordination of SEL:

- What are the characteristics of a leader who effectively supports SEL implementation and culturally responsive practices (CRP)?
- How does Andover organize its leadership to move forward SEL and CRP in all schools and offices within the district?
- What are the types and characteristics of professional development offered by Andover Public Schools to ensure effective SEL and CRP implementation?
- How does the district assess progress in the areas of SEL and CRP implementation? What are the major effects of these two processes on student and staff performance?
- How does Andover reinforce a systemic approach to learners' mental and behavioral health (including both students and the adult learner)?
- How does the Andover Board of Education support SEL and CRP through both its policies and practices?
- What have you discovered about budget and human resource implications of SEL and CRP implementation?

JUNE 9, 2020

School-Based Administrators: Representative elementary, middle, and high school administrators reflected on the importance and impact of social-emotional learning upon school-based organizational culture and the well-being of students and staff. Questions included:

- What are your examples of effective SEL leadership in your respective program areas and responsibilities?
- How has Andover integrated SEL into its written, taught, and assessed curriculum? What are observable indicators of this process?
- How is Andover striving to establish a culturally responsive community in all its schools and offices?
- How is Andover implementing a systemic response to addressing trauma and mental health concerns among all members of its learning community?
- What specific practices and programs have enhanced SEL and culturally responsive elementary classrooms? (e.g., Responsive Classroom morning meetings, Second-Step Lessons, Readers' Workshop, Tier 3 Intervention Program)
- What specific practices and programs have enhanced SEL and culturally responsive middle school classrooms? (e.g., CREW Advisory Program)
- What specific practices and programs have enhanced SEL and culturally responsive high school classrooms? (e.g., H-Block Advisory, Capstone Program, Global Network Pathway, Service Learning)

JUNE 16, 2020

The Teacher Perspective (Elementary, Middle, High): Teachers representing elementary, middle, and high school classrooms and different content areas reflected on the following guiding questions:

- How has your teaching been affected by your work with social-emotional learning and culturally responsive practices?
- How has your work in this area impacted your students? What kinds of growth are you seeing in your students?
- What are the key classroom management practices you are using that reinforce students' social and emotional growth and development?
- How are you integrating SEL and CRP into your implementation of the Andover curriculum?
- What assessment practices can you recommend to help other teachers monitor the social and emotional development as well as cultural responsiveness of your students?
- What recommendations can you make to teachers and administrators beginning the process of SEL and CRP implementation?
- What are the characteristics of effective leaders of social and emotional learning?

JUNE 23, 2020

State Leadership and SEL: Leaders at the Massachusetts State Department of Education and other organizations shared their insights into the importance of SEL and efforts underway to expand its impact in schools throughout the state. Questions included:

- What is the rationale for emphasizing SEL in Massachusetts state-wide standards and programs?
- How has the Massachusetts Department of Education established state goals for social and emotional learning and cultural responsiveness?
- How does the Massachusetts Department of Education support cross-district networking to reinforce SEL implementation?
- What are examples of effective cross-district collaborative initiatives related to SEL and CRP?
- How are Massachusetts universities providing support and credentialing to build educators' SEL competencies and enhance SEL implementation?
- What do state leaders identify as characteristics of effective SEL leadership?

JULY 2020

The Superintendent's Perspective: The Andover virtual case study involved a one-on-one interview with Superintendent Sheldon Berman to elicit his reflections and recommendations about SEL and leadership strategies related to its successful implementation.

- What is your current philosophy of leadership of SEL?
- How have you used the principle of distributed leadership to promote systemic implementation of SEL in Andover?
- How would you summarize the key lessons you have learned about leading SEL?
- How would you summarize the most significant effects of SEL upon education in Andover Public Schools?
- What is the relationship between equity and SEL?
- What recommendations can you give for aligning digital learning with effective SEL strategies and processes?

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) IN ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS: MISSION, VISION, AND THEORY OF ACTION

A major focus of the SEL implementation process in Andover Public Schools involves a systemic commitment to a shared language, controlling values, and guiding principles concerning the importance of social-emotional learning as a critical key to students' academic success and well-being. The following mission and vision statements, student outcomes, and guiding principles are integrated into all aspects of the Andover continuous improvement process.

Andover Public Schools Mission Statement:

In APS, we strive to prepare students who recognize the value of both formal and informal education and who will pursue learning throughout their lives as a means of enriching their personal and professional experiences. Knowing that their future will be challenging, we want our students to be well equipped with the intellectual and interpersonal skills to tackle problems and to persevere until they succeed. Perhaps most important of all, we envision our graduates as active and contributing citizens who value our increasingly diverse society and whose decisions are grounded in a strong system of ethics that extends to all facets of their lives. In order to attain that vision in the future, we must turn our current attention to the building blocks that need to be in place today. These building blocks, these steps toward the future, constitute our Mission.

ANDOVER **THEORY OF ACTION**

Viewed in their entirety, our goals, mission, and vision provide the framework of what we want to achieve and how we plan to get there. We call this framework our *Theory of Action*:

WHEN we collaborate to...

1. Create safe, caring, and culturally responsive classrooms and schools, and partner with families and the community to support students' academic growth and their social, physical and emotional well-being;

2. Ensure that every student is engaged in a rigorous curriculum that is implemented consistently within and across schools;

3. Provide inclusive instruction that engages every student in authentic learning experiences, demonstrates the power of effective effort and fosters inquiry, creativity and positive risk taking; and

4. Monitor student progress diagnostically and plan instruction after thorough and thoughtful data analysis to ensure every student reaches proficiency;

THEN all students will...

1. Demonstrate academic growth in foundational content and skills;

2. Communicate effectively, think critically, problem solve creatively, work collaboratively, and evaluate objectively;

3. Be self-directed and persevering agents of their own learning; and

4. Demonstrate cultural awareness, an appreciation of self, empathy toward others, a sense of responsibility, and commitment to civic engagement;

SO THAT all students are prepared to...

1. Be lifelong learners able to pursue their personal and professional goals;

2. Face adversity and ambiguity with intellectual skill, open-mindedness, adaptability, courage and confidence;

3. Make informed, just, and ethical decisions; and

4. Be connected and compassionate citizens who contribute to a diverse and global society.

ANDOVER **MISSION**

We will provide every student with opportunities and support to...

1. Demonstrate academic growth in foundational content and skills.

2. Communicate effectively, think critically, solve problems creatively, work collaboratively, and evaluate objectively.

3. Be self-directed and persevering agents of their own learning.

4. Demonstrate cultural awareness, an appreciation of self, empathy toward others, a sense of responsibility, and commitment to civic engagement.

ANDOVER **VISION**

We will prepare all students to...

1. Be lifelong learners able to pursue their personal and professional goals.

2. Face adversity and ambiguity with intellectual skill, open-mindedness, adaptability, courage and confidence.

3. Make informed, just, and ethical decisions.

4. Be connected and compassionate citizens who contribute to a diverse and global society.

HIGHLIGHTS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

1. Effective implementation of SEL requires that your district develop a clear and consensus-driven SEL mission that reinforces the importance of social-emotional learning as a central component of student achievement.

2. Your SEL mission should articulate your district's controlling principles and values related to the adoption and implementation of SEL as a systemic priority.

3. Your SEL vision statement should express your intended impact of SEL implementation upon district organizational culture, academic achievement, and student-staff well-being.

4. Successful districts implementing SEL in a sustained and scalable way also have a clearly articulated theory of action that frames your rationale for implementing SEL as well as what you intend to accomplish—and how you intend to accomplish it.

? REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

1. With which elements of the Andover Public Schools mission, vision, and theory of action do you strongly agree?

2. To what extent do your personal guiding principles for SEL align with the Andover model?

3. To what extent are the students in your district or school demonstrating the skills, dispositions, and habits of mind identified in the Andover theory of action?

A Synthesis of Key SEL Programs and Practices in Andover Public Schools

According to the Andover Public Schools (APS) synthesis document "Success in Social Emotional Learning," the district is "dedicated to providing creative and high-quality instruction that educates the whole child from pre-school to graduation. APS prides itself as one of the highest performing school districts in Massachusetts. Our goal is to create safe, caring, and culturally responsive classrooms and schools, and partner with families and the community to support students' academic growth and their social, physical, and emotional well-being." Key SEL programs and practices in Andover Public Schools include the following:

1 Sustained professional development for faculty and administrators, including ongoing workshops involving SEL and Responsive Classroom.

2 Year-long training and SEL endorsement program in partnership with William James College.

3 Expanded use of Responsive Classroom at the elementary level.

4 Direct instruction of social skills at the elementary level, including use of programs such as Open Circle and Second Step, as well as building inclusive classroom communities through such programs as Responsive Classroom.

5 Implementation of the Where Everyone Belongs (WEB) program in all middle schools.

6 Design and implementation of the One Community, One Nation elementary social studies curriculum to focus on diversity and equity through the content themes of community, culture, and civics.

7 Emphasis upon diversity and cultural proficiency at the secondary level through professional development facilitated by Facing History and Ourselves.

8 Administration of the Panorama Survey to chart progress in fostering a positive school climate; promoting a sense of belonging, safety, and engagement; and examining students' social awareness, growth mindset, and grit.

9 Implementation of a Tier 3 support program for students facing mental health challenges at APS middle schools, with expansion plans for elementary and high schools.

10 Sustained use of a high school advisory program to personalize the learning environment.

11 Use of a personalization period called "H Block" at the high school level, based on a rotating eight-day schedule (with H Block lasting 63 or 80 minutes and occurring five times in each eight-day cycle—parallel to all other courses).

12 Use of community service and service learning to develop leadership skills and connect students with organizations and individuals who are making a difference in the community.

13 RAISE—Our Community Values: APS emphasizes civic and character education, reinforcing respect, achievement, inclusion, service, and empathy.

14 Andover Healthy Relationships Coalition: As part of a state-wide initiative, APS has established this coalition to improve communication and the culture of the school community to empower student voice and increase education and awareness that promotes healthy relationship skills for students.

15 Integration of mindfulness techniques and strategies, including opportunities for students and staff to engage in mindfulness practices such as stretch breaks, visualization, and incorporation of movement and color.

16 Integration of SEL into Andover's Multi-Tiered System of Support, including:

- Tier 1: Integration of SEL into core instruction, including school-wide positive behavior expectations and procedures (RAISE);

- Tier 2: Providing targeted interventions for students who are non-responsive to Tier 1 and may require additional support, including small-group social skills instruction, counseling, check-in/check-out systems, and self-monitoring skills; and

- Tier 3: Highly individualized support based on non-responsiveness to previous tiers, including modification of social skills instruction (including increase in frequency, duration, intensity, and/or small-group instruction).

17 SEL-related resources for families, including resources and programs for dealing with loss, anxiety, school refusal, depression, and trauma.

18 Major emphasis upon the SEL needs of students and staff during times of crisis and trauma, including the recent school closings resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic (with major concentration upon SEL needs of returning students and staff as schools reopen).

? REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

1. As you reflect on Andover's programs related to SEL, how do programs in your current district reinforce social-emotional learning?

2. Which of the identified Andover programs have parallel or similar programs in your current district?

3. Are there programs and services identified in this section that you need to enhance or implement in your current district and schools?

4. What action steps might you take to begin this phase of SEL program development in your role as district leader?

SEL Leadership, Part I:
The Superintendent's Role in SEL Implementation
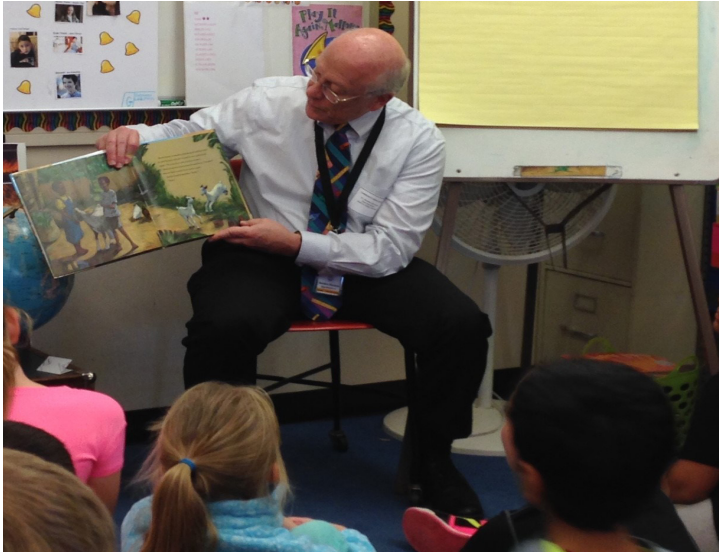
Dr. Sheldon Berman became superintendent of the Andover Public Schools in Massachusetts on July 1, 2015. During his tenure in Andover, he has been responsible for implementing a strategic planning process focused on innovation and authentic learning. His staff has instituted a range of authentic learning processes and programs, including capstone projects for 5th, 8th, and 12th graders; innovation labs and maker spaces; and a high school global network focused on the United Nations sustainability goals. Under his leadership, the district has also developed an innovative elementary social studies program, One Community, One Nation, that integrates social studies, literacy, and the arts—focusing on the themes of community, culture, and civics K through 5.

He previously served as superintendent of the Eugene School District in Eugene, Oregon, from 2011 to 2015; superintendent of Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky, from 2007 to 2011; and superintendent of the Hudson (MA) Public Schools from 1993 to 2007. His professional achievements include leadership roles in Educators for Social Responsibility and co-authorship of the Aspen Institute's National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development report: The Practice Base for How We Learn: Supporting Students' Social, Emotional, and Academic Development.

Establishing and Communicating a Philosophy of SEL Leadership

Dr. Berman's involvement with and commitment to social-emotional learning (SEL) extends from his experience with Educators for Social Responsibility (now entitled Engaging Schools)—including extensive writing on SEL and social

responsibility. He expresses his leadership of SEL as being centered in the need to "create a positive learning environment by caring for people, where faculty feel supported, students feel known, and the organizational culture is collaborative." Berman consistently revisits the theme of public education being about developing citizens who can help democracy thrive, including the development of a sense of social consciousness and responsibility in young people.

SEL Leadership "Lessons Learned"

Berman asserts that educators are not given nor do they take enough time on professional development involving the whole child and students' physical, social, and emotional development. He also asserts that SEL professional development must be an introspective process in which educators reflect on their language (Are we sarcastic or condescending with students?), their focus (Are we focused on assets rather than deficits…emphasizing successes and affirmations rather than criticism and negative feedback?), and their emotional reactions (both overt and covert, including the need to control our anger or related affective responses to students).

The larger goal must be to establish, reinforce, and sustain connection and relationships, and to overcome the implicit biases we all bring to learning environments. We must start with ourselves, Berman contends. Another lesson involves community building. He frequently revisits the theme of our national culture being highly individualistic, whereas many communities of color have more communitarian heritages. We must, he asserts, understand the value of community and the need to protect and care for one another. "We are all connected in an intricate web of relationships." Berman contends that this set of lessons should be seen as foundational: "One community, one nation…we begin with community as a foundational concept and experience…"

Berman's SEL "lessons learned" also include comments about the grading and hiring processes used in school districts. He is a strong proponent for grades being a tool for providing feedback and coaching to students (and parents). In Andover, for example, elementary report cards are standards- based. The district is also exploring a new "student resume" designed to give students ownership of their own learning and opportunities to present that learning via a student resume and capstone projects.

Similarly, hiring practices in Andover integrate SEL as a key component of the personnel recruitment and placement process. It is included in ads and job descriptions, just as interviews and new staff induction programs emphasize

community building. The district encourages the hiring of progressive educators who are committed to engaging students in authentic work and projects.

The Relationship of Equity and SEL

Under Berman's leadership, Andover is committed to creating "identity-safe" schools, bringing students' culture, voice and experiences into the community-building process. Also, the district actively engages all learners in the decision-making process related to their own education, i.e., taking a personalized approach to learning in which students see themselves as viable decision-makers in their own learning environment.

To achieve these equity goals, Andover focuses on voice and connection as two core themes in all schools within the district. According to Berman: "You have to look carefully at the content you are teaching and the way you are teaching it to determine if it resonates with and supports cultural diversity within the classroom. Schools should be communities where you build relationships with and among students so that they are supporting one another's learning." He stresses that students must see themselves reflected in what they are reading and doing as well as in the history they are learning (a key theme in the district's One Community, One Nation social studies curriculum).

Equity and SEL are interconnected in Berman's leadership model. Classroom cultures, for example, must address all learners' individual cultures as well as shared cultural traditions and experiences. Educators must be respectful of all learners, making the classroom learning experience accessible to everyone. For example, literature in Andover includes graphic novels, books that have a lot of pictures, regular chapter books, and resources to ensure that struggling readers have "text help" integrated into their reading lessons.

Berman stresses that equity in education necessitates that every student is accorded respect and acknowledgment for their achievements. The diversity of students (including racial, ethnic, socio-economic, religious, gender, region, etc.) must be considered and addressed in lesson design and delivery. True equity exists when every student has the resources, support, and encouragement to succeed and experiences themselves as a valued member of the classroom, school, and overall learning community.

SEL and the Digital World

In light of the recent COVID-19 pandemic, Andover has demonstrated deep commitment to the continuity of the learning process and the need to address inequities in students' engagement in the learning process (including sustaining their sense of connection, support, and access to technology). Even in a remote environment, Berman suggests, you can create a sense of community.

Teachers in Andover are encouraged to have students build on one another's thinking, including distance learning that emphasizes working in small groups to reinforce connection and community. Morning meetings are held daily, for example, and teachers have worked tirelessly to deliver packages to students' doorsteps, engage in car parades to sustain morale, and provide counseling related to trauma through teletherapy.

Digital and in-person resources have also been used to sustain courageous conversations about race, including "who we are and how we are feeling." Berman and his staff encourage teachers to use the virtual classroom as a context for having conversations about risks, trauma, and resources available to both students and their families.

Concluding Ideas About the Importance of SEL in Education

Berman is highly consistent in his praise for teachers and administrators for their deep commitment to the work of SEL implementation. In acknowledging the teachers and administrators engaged in this case study, he states: "I have been blown away by their commitment and enthusiasm. Our conversations have been so exciting—and reinforce that educators in our district love the connection that SEL offers. They are deeply committed to their connections with the students they teach."

Berman concludes by asserting that the district's work with SEL "sustains teachers…and it is the lack of in-person contact with students that has been so difficult for them during the pandemic. The quality of our teaching is based on the connection we establish with our students…and ensuring that they feel cared about and known. It brings vitality and energy to learning—it is the glue that connects them."

HIGHLIGHTS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

1. For SEL implementation to be successful at a district level, the superintendent must embrace the importance of SEL and its clear relationship to academic achievement as well as student and staff well-being.

2. SEL leadership in a district must be distributed, i.e., committed to engaging key stakeholders in the decision-making, problem-solving, and professional development processes that must be developed, sustained, and ultimately scaled up to ensure long-range impact and effectiveness.

3. An effective superintendent deeply understands and reinforces with staff the clear and significant relationship between SEL implementation and the range of equity issues facing education today (e.g., racial and ethnic disproportionality, socio-economic disparities, language minority issues, and the education of students identified for special education services).

? REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

1. To what extent do you agree with Dr. Berman's assertions and principles of leadership?

2. How do you address the various priority areas Dr. Berman identifies in Andover's approach to SEL implementation?

3. To what extent do you agree with Dr. Berman's assertion that building a collaborative district culture and reinforcing positive student-teacher relationships are essential building blocks of a successful school district?

SEL Leadership, Part II:
District-Level Perspectives on Leadership for Social-Emotional Learning and Culturally Responsive Practice

Panel One

This part of the Andover case study involved interviews with four district leaders who have been instrumental in leading SEL implementation in the district.

- Hannah Tolla, Director of Data, Accountability and Financial Analytics for Andover Public Schools
- Pamela Lathrop, Principal of High Plain Elementary School;
- Sandra A. Trach, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning;
- Sara Stetson, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services;
- Susan K. McCready, a member of the Andover School Committee (i.e., Board of Education)

June 2, 2020: Central Office Leadership

Dr. Sheldon Berman, Superintendent of Schools, and representatives from his central office staff shared insights in response to the following essential questions involving system-level coordination of SEL:

- What are the characteristics of a leader who effectively supports SEL implementation and culturally responsive practices?
- How does Andover organize its leadership to move forward SEL and CRP in all schools and offices within the district?
- What are the types and characteristics of professional development offered by Andover Public Schools to ensure effective SEL and CRP implementation?
- How does the district assess progress in the areas of SEL and CRP implementation? What are the major effects of these two processes on student and staff performance?
- How does Andover reinforce a systemic approach to learners' mental and behavioral health (including both students and the adult learner)?
- How does the Andover Board of Education support SEL and CRP through both its policies and practices?
- What have you discovered about budget and human resource implications of SEL and CRP implementation?

Key Principles and Assertions of Andover Public Schools District Office Leadership

District leaders interviewed for this case study were unanimous in their support of social-emotional learning as a key determinant of student achievement and equity in the Andover Public School System. As Dr. Sheldon Berman asserted in his introduction to central office staff members, "We are a work in progress and are glad to share our SEL work with you. As the authors of A Nation at Risk concluded: Children learn best when we treat them as human beings with social and emotional needs as well as academic needs."

Andover district leaders interviewed for this case study reinforced four key strategic goals for using SEL to advance student learning: (1) ensuring caring and culturally responsive classrooms; (2) providing rigorous curriculum; (3) sustained progress monitoring of students' academic growth as well as their SEL development; and (4) providing inclusive instruction that reinforces the principles of equity, engagement, and collaboration. They also agreed that the social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum, including giving students ongoing opportunities to develop their ability to take into account others' perspectives, resolve conflicts positively; and move from debate to dialogue—and from polarization to common ground.

According to Andover leadership, a sense of community and inclusivity is critical for successful SEL implementation. All students must be given support to experience being valued, influential contributors to a classroom just as the school must be dedicated to the learning and well-being of all members of its learning community.

Leaders identified five "practice components" reinforced in all Andover Public Schools

1. Direct social skill instruction
2. Integration of social skills into academic instruction
3. The importance of sustaining positive and engaging school and classroom climate and culture
4. Providing students multiple practical experiences in the community
5. The critical importance of service learning and community service

Key Principles of a Systemic Approach to SEL Implementation

Andover's central office leaders reinforced the critical importance of a comprehensive and systemic approach to implementing and sustaining SEL at the district level, including:

1. **Self-Instruction**: placing the learner at the center of the learning process;

2. **Curricular Integration**: maintaining a collaborative approach to teaching-learning, integrating literature into our curriculum with classroom libraries representative of different cultures, races, and ethnicities—reinforcing inclusivity, as well as community and service learning;

3. **Introducing and Reinforcing SEL Early, Starting at the Elementary Level**: using a range of integrated and personalized programs such as Second Step/Open Circle, collaborative learning, culturally diverse literature, Responsive Classroom (community building in the classroom), student councils, and service learning;

4. **Addressing the SEL Needs of the Early Adolescent**: building students' social-emotional learning competencies at the middle school level, including building and sustaining inclusivity through the Where Everyone Belongs (WEB) program;

5. **High School SEL Focus Areas**: using student advisory periods as part of the high school schedule to reinforce personalization (i.e., the H-Block Advisory) and using Facing History and Ourselves to reinforce cultural responsiveness and competence;

6. **Service Projects**: reinforcing community commitment and service through authentic, performance-based projects, K-12.

According to one district leader, "We define social development in a broad sense as the development of social and emotional skills that enable students to function well in the classroom and larger society. Culturally responsive classrooms and practices ensure that we are inclusive and responsive to all individuals."

Social-Emotional Learning and Culturally Responsive Practices (Pamela Lathrop, Principal, High Plain Elementary School, Andover Public Schools)

Pamela Lathrop began her interview and presentation by referencing Andover's Theory of Action (agreed upon by all stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and support staff): "Our shared mission is to collaborate to create safe, caring and culturally responsive classrooms and schools, and partner with families and the community to support students' academic growth and their social, physical, and emotional well-being." According to Lathrop, the Andover "SEL Sprint is a continuous improvement process utilizing the principles of agile strategic planning. Agile strategic planning provides flexibility so that just-in-time adjustments can be made in a strategic plan. The SEL Sprint's efforts are grounded in the values of respect, self-awareness, empathy, and relationships."

Currently, the Andover SEL Sprint has eight district and school leaders with roles ever evolving to allow leaders to address problems as they emerge—building responsiveness in comparison to traditional strategic planning processes that focus on meeting deadlines and fulfilling bureaucratic protocol. The SEL Sprint defines a target, focus, members,

and strategic initiatives that include:

1. **Target**: All students feel safe, valued, and connected to school.

2. **Focus**: The SEL and CRP (Culturally Responsive Practice) Sprint will focus on professional development for staff in order to advance the goal of caring and culturally responsive classrooms and schools.

3. **Membership**: Participants include administrators and staff from across the district.

4. **Four Major Initiatives**:
   a. Focus on professional development for staff in order to advance the goal of caring and culturally responsive classrooms and schools;
   b. Use of the Panorama Survey—centralizing school survey information for specific support and training;
   c. Providing ongoing professional development through the William and James Graduate Certificate in School Climate and Social Emotional Learning, which involves evidence-based learning at the school level and includes building action plans and cross-school partnerships;
   d. Establishing district and school-based Cultural Climate Committees (C3) with each school having its own and each school sending a representative to the central committee. The focus of the C3 committees is on pursuing strategies to promote culturally responsive curriculum, instruction, and professional development.

Lathrop repeatedly emphasizes that educational leaders have to educate staff about SEL, its importance, and key strategies/processes. Therefore, professional development in Andover has been hand-in-hand and shoulder-to-shoulder. She is an advocate of the Responsive Classroom model, which has allowed elementary educators to work with leadership in central office to establish and reinforce positive school and classroom climate and culture.

Characteristics of Effective Leaders of Social-Emotional Learning

Lathrop asserts: "I think being a good listener and observer is key. An effective leader has to hear and see what is going on and listen to everyone who is part of your school community—including students, faculty, and family. I also think it is important to recognize that everyone is on a learning continuum. It is wrong to assume everyone knows what SEL is and or how to effectively address SEL."

She emphasizes that an effective leader has to be invested and connected: "This work is hard. Empathy is an important characteristic. Leaders can't just give it lip service. Leaders need to be involved. They need to model and learn with their faculty. It has to permeate all that we do. SEL is not a 30-minute once-a-week lesson. Also, SEL is not a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach. Commitment is also key. If we want to build a strong SEL culture, leaders have to devote time and offer support and training to the process of SEL implementation."

Beginning and Sustaining the SEL Implementation and Change Process

Lathrop urges educational leaders beginning the process of SEL implementation to start slowly, encouraging them to think about their values as a district and a community and go from there. Educators must have sufficient time to understand SEL, learn about it, and become a part of the journey with the leaders in their building and district. She encourages leaders to think about the process holistically, i.e., not as a stand-alone activity but as a process that must become an integral part of the culture and climate of a school and district.

She encourages leaders to start small by identifying shared consensus-driven goals to allow staff to grow together on the journey. It is critical that leaders be careful in selecting SEL resources and professional development programs since, according to Lathrop, there are "a lot out there—and not everything is of high quality. It helps to have a leadership team or a group of people who are dedicated to the work and want to be the cheerleaders for the work."

All Andover district leaders were in consensus about the SEL implementation process being a change catalyst in both schools and districts. As such, leaders must honor where people are in the process, provide resources and support as staff learns and grows, and be very clear about expectations and outcomes. Lathrop also stresses the value of consistent modeling; she is committed to interacting with her staff the same way that she hopes they will interact with their students.

She emphasizes: "I have also learned that SEL is an evolving process. You are never really done because there is always more to explore. For example, equity and trauma-informed practices are major focus points during the pandemic—and beyond. You have to show teachers the connection between social-emotional development and academic achievement. The demands and pressure to succeed are always there. SEL shouldn't be another thing or an add-on. It is a practice that helps us meet academic goals and performance targets in our school and district strategic plan."

Effective Professional Learning for Program Implementation (Sandra A. Trach, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning)

A critical component of Andover's successful implementation of social-emotional learning is its richly differentiated and comprehensive professional development program, including teacher-led, online, and cross-functional training sessions. Trach identifies the following key professional development programs that provide ongoing support for staff learning and growth in the area of SEL:

1. **Responsive Classroom**: The district has provided onsite summer professional development for the Level I Core Course and the Level II Advanced Course (Elementary

Level) over the past three years. This process has involved 118 elementary and six middle school teachers in Level I and 48 elementary teachers in Level II. The district has invested $109,000 in this professional development initiative. All participants received either graduate credit or professional development points for this four-day institute. In addition, the elementary school schedule changed in 2019-20 with the school day increased by fifteen minutes. This time was designated for teachers to provide SEL closing meetings. There is now universal use of opening and closing meeting processes (e.g., morning meetings, end-of-day wrap-ups) across the district.

2. **William James College**: Graduate Certificate in School Climate and SEL: Andover Public Schools has sent four-member teams from four schools to participate in this 15-credit graduate program with tuition paid by the district. The program includes three practicum courses with field experiences completed at the school of employment. The district has made a $54,000 investment in order to provide teachers and school leaders with a deep level of understanding of SEL and SEL implementation.

3. **One Community, One Nation**: To embed SEL into the elementary curriculum, the district has been creating an integrated social studies, literacy, and arts curriculum focused on the concepts of community, culture, and civic engagement. The curriculum emphasizes a set of civic dispositions that extend social-emotional skills so that students understand what it means to live in a community. The district has supported seven three-day institutes over two years involving half the district's elementary teachers. It has also invested $114,000 in these institutes.

4. **Facing History and Ourselves**: The district contracted with the Facing History and Ourselves Foundation in Brookline, Massachusetts, to provide professional development to all educators at the secondary level. The program addresses bigotry and racism in order to build identity-safe classrooms. The program involves keynotes, small-group facilitated discussions, videos, articles, and reflection across one full release day and four two-hour early release days. This training spawned school-based cultural proficiency teams in 2019-20 that connect to the district team. This process led to the district securing a $100,000 grant from the Cummings Foundation to continue the focus on culturally responsive learning communities at the elementary level.

5. **Elementary Classroom Libraries**: To deeply integrate attention to culture and diversity, the district has provided each elementary teacher with a classroom library to support the district's reading workshop approach. This library is characterized by literature in which main characters, national settings, and the authors themselves are representative of the diversity of students in the classroom. The goal is for children to see themselves in the literature they read as well as have a window on the world around them. The district has encompassed this approach in the terms "windows and mirrors" to

encapsulate the idea that students can "see themselves in the curriculum and see others in the literature they study."

Trach reinforces the important role of administrators in the professional development process. She contends that effective leaders of social-emotional learning lead and model with empathy as the core of their values and the center of their decision-making. They strive to take the perspective of others, especially when it is different from their own or when it is unfamiliar, and ask questions to listen and learn for understanding. She states: "SEL leaders put others' needs ahead of their own, and consider the collective good at all turns. Human-centered leadership and child-centered learning are both the means and the end for an effective SEL leader."

She also emphasizes that successful SEL educational leaders begin the SEL implementation and professional development process by listening and learning with curiosity "for longer than you think you need to." She adds: "Suspend judgment and avoid quick conclusions. Instead, lean into the questions you might have about SEL. Reflect on what you see in classrooms, and what you learn from those directly teaching and caring for students, colleagues and families. Consider journaling what you have absorbed, annotate your observations, and reflect upon this. Notice and consider what themes emerge. Engage in dialogue groups with stakeholders about what you have learned, and employ a shared discussion process on developing next steps. Together, the leader and teams will design a natural path to begin the journey."

In Trach's opinion, the SEL professional development process and systemic change are closely linked: "I have learned that change represents different things to different people. For some, it is exhilarating and for others, it is a fearful proposition. For most change initiatives, SEL and otherwise, I've learned you need to go slower than you think you need to, likely reduce your objectives by half, and extend your implementation timeline. This is the realistic volume and velocity of the change process. By doing this, the SEL leader has more authentic time with people, which is pivotal in human-centered leadership. Going too fast and asking too much alienates stakeholders from not just the leader, but also the SEL initiative."

Strong SEL leaders know, according to Trach, that it takes time to build an SEL system and people are our most important and valued resource: "With students, teachers, staff and families at the center of all we do, effective leaders must guide and ground their school's or district's SEL work through the stages of change. When the change is finally realized, it is accomplished together in a reasonable timeline and human-centered way for the best interest of students."

Building Systems of Care (Dr. Sara Stetson, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services)

A major and recurrent theme that emerged in the Andover case study is the critical need to provide services to students and families in an aligned, holistic way. The hallmark of the Andover SEL initiative is its integration of academic, social,

psychological, and mental health programs and services—reinforcing the idea that an effective 21st-century education must address the health, physical development, social-emotional, psychological, and mental health needs of every learner.

Sara Stetson emphasizes the critical role of systems thinking and building a system of care from prevention and early identification to cross-disciplinary and cross-agency collaboration to meet the diverse needs of students and their families. Stetson emphasizes that no longer can school districts work in isolation to meet students' needs, nor can staff and departments work in isolation within a district or individual schoolhouse. A system of care (SOC) approach develops a spectrum of effective, integrated services, supports, and programs for children and youth with or at risk for mental or behavioral health challenges. An SOC community includes an inclusive, coordinated network. SOCs focus on building meaningful partnerships with families and youth—across disciplines, across programs, and across school and community boundaries. An effective system of care addresses the cultural, linguistic, social, and emotional

needs of students and their families to help them function better at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life. Dr. Stetson emphasizes that a well-constructed system of care is as flexible as its community members are varied.

Stetson describes the process used by Andover Public Schools to build Andover's Human Services collaborative:

1. **Coordinating People**: Previously, Andover's Board-Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs), psychologists, and social workers operated in isolation. This model created role confusion and competing priorities based on training and theoretical orientation when applying services to students. In building a system of care, the first priority was to eliminate service silos and organize these professionals under a clinical director who could provide ongoing supervision, clarity of purpose, and a bridging, child-focused influence among the various related professional orientations. Another aspect of coordinating people was to restructure roles. For example, Andover secured a competitive grant to train ten instructional assistants to be Registered Behavior Technicians and distributed those staff among the five elementary schools under the supervision of the district's Board-Certified Behavior Analysts. This program allowed the BCBAs to focus on their professional priorities of assessment, consultation, and program development.

Next, Andover focused on the role of the school psychologist. Previously, the psychologists role had been restricted to testing. By placing psychologists in other roles such as mobile support team facilitators, group therapy leaders, and program instructors, the district was able to educate the school community about best practices in school psychology and utilize existing staff to develop new programs. Finally, Andover coordinated with the nursing team to expand the role of the school nurse in working collaboratively to coordinate mental health care for students. For example, school nurses were trained as wrap-around team coaches for students at risk.

2. **Coordinating Data**: Both quantitative and qualitative data reveal critical information about the ways in which we might approach change and, more importantly, address the lived experiences of students. Quantitative data, by describing, predicting, and comparing, can show us the degree to which we must apply resources to a problem. Qualitative data tells a story about our place and time. As Brene Brown puts it, "Stories are just data with a soul," and data with a soul is critical to grounding the work. When schoolhouses work in isolation, there is a tendency to lose the big picture and focus on specific individual needs. When the episodic nature of needs is overlooked, we lose the stories that tell us why our work is important. The second order of business in building a system of care was to examine the stories told by the data. To develop tiered interventions that would form a network of options that could be employed flexibly and responsively, Andover first had to know the stories.

Stetson illustrates the key characteristics of this system by comparing it to more traditional approaches:

FROM

- Fragmented service delivery in siloes
- Categorical programs/funding
- Limited services
- Reactive, crisis-oriented
- Focus on out-of-district or restrictive placements
- Anecdotally driven
- Centralized authority
- Creation of "dependency"
- Haphazard practices

TO

- Coordinated service delivery
- Blended resources
- Comprehensive services and supports
- Focus on prevention
- Individualized services and supports in least restrictive, normalized environments
- Accountability driven
- Community-based ownership
- Creation of self-help
- Consistent, evidence-based practices

Andover eliminated data silos by examining information across disciplines. District leaders included sources such as the Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT), Signs of Suicide (SOS), Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS), and the school nurses' student information system. They also mapped the number and severity of mental health challenges (the stories) at each school, using a heat mapping approach, to reveal overall acuity levels. They cross-referenced this data with the out-of-district placements of students in high-needs therapeutic facilities to determine the journey maps to students' mental health.

To ensure early intervention and detection, they also selected a universal screener. The screener is oriented toward mental health indicators because there is a significant lag between onset, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health conditions, so there are many unserved students in schools. Finally, they chose a set of data collection tools to monitor the effectiveness of the intervention programs they have been implementing. The tools include student self-reports, classroom teacher reports, and individual scores on the Social Skills Improvement System Social-Emotional Learning edition scales (SSIS SEL).

3. **Coordinating Programs**: Five years ago, Andover did not offer coordinated interventions to meet the needs of children with mental and behavioral health challenges. Many districts open substantially separate programs that are isolating and stigmatizing. These programs separate children from their neighborhood schools and send a tacit message that children with social-emotional needs are not welcome. To provide a model of inclusivity, Andover used a systems lens to build the infrastructure necessary for interventions, services, and programs that could operate in a multi-tiered network across schools. Once again, the development of system-wide supports in favor of isolated "programs" required a cross-disciplinary approach; or the elimination of service delivery silos. A systems approach, Andover realized, would require the restructuring of existing roles and the reassignment of existing staff.

First, the mental health team redesigned an existing program to support students transitioning back to the school community after hospitalization, school refusal, or other traumatic events. Then, they trained existing staff to provide coaching to at-risk students. Andover chose a research-based, wrap-around model from the Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire. The Resilience, Empowerment, and Natural Supports for Education and Work (RENEW) program employs a person-centered planning and coaching approach that gives students the tools and skills they need to direct their own futures planning.

At the same time, they restructured service delivery models in one elementary school and one middle school to offer a multidisciplinary, tiered intervention program. The program provides regular support for at-risk students, more structured support for students with identified mental health needs, and intensive services for students with serious emotional disabilities as a primary educational disability. These services include Dialectical Behavior Therapy and skills instruction targeted at managing specific mental health conditions.

All students participating in Andover's in-district programs are included in their home schools and regular education classes with non-disabled peers. A full-time psychologist, a special educator, a social worker, and school administrators coordinate the programs at each level. Because Andover's mental health team developed the programs by restructuring existing resources, they have built the internal capacity to rapidly expand. This year, Andover expanded the program to a second elementary school and the high school. Within the next three years, the plan will include all five elementary schools and all three middle schools.

Another important component of coordinating programs includes community and inter-agency collaboration. Most Andover students who receive regular mental and behavioral health services (73%) do not have a private treatment team. Some may not be able to access these services for various reasons, and some families may not be comfortable accessing private therapeutic services. Since students and parents are already involved in the school community, the final silo to break down is the limited involvement of community mental health services in the schools. Thus, the coordinated plan includes direct collaboration with community resources. Andover has plans to partner with a local mental health clinic to provide direct services to both students and their parents in the schools. The program will be coordinated by a social worker, and referrals and intake will be monitored by program staff in collaboration with clinic staff.

Perhaps most significantly, Stetson emphasizes the critical need for educational leaders to reinforce the power of aligning inter-departmental priorities, community and school outreach, and academic and student services programs. Like all Andover respondents, Stetson reinforces the need for a "whole child" approach to students' education, integrating school and district approaches to monitoring and providing support for learners' physical growth and development and their social-emotional and psychological development, as well as their academic progress.

Much has been written about change leadership, but Dr. Stetson believes the stories we tell are at the heart of change. Stories build connections between people and ideas, illuminate shared goals, place challenges in context, and most importantly build empathy—the most critical element of this work. Stetson states: "If we do not understand and care about the lived lives of our students and their families, we cannot begin to build systems that are flexible, responsive, authentic,

and values-driven."

The Need for Policy Support (Susan McCready, Andover School Committee)

Finally, district-level leadership of SEL implementation requires the active engagement of the district's governing officers. According to Susan McCready: "A school committee (Massachusetts' title for a district's board of education) is responsible for policy support. We need partnership between the operations of the district and the committee in order to best support SEL implementation. Students must feel welcomed, safe, and invited to learn. They must be comfortable in making mistakes. SEL integration helps students to grow and address challenging topics and personal issues. We also make sure that there is budget support for SEL."

Professionally, McCready has worked in management and the management of information systems. As a committee member she sees that the district is using a systems approach to addressing SEL: "I'm thrilled to see educational delivery in Andover Public Schools under Dr. Berman's direction, with the district adopting practices similar to that which I am familiar with around 'Agile Development' (AD). AD enables ongoing trial-and-error approaches to finding solutions to problems of practice versus the long wait for the delivery of one big system that may not hit the mark."

McCready emphasizes that the Andover School Committee is an active and engaged partner with district leaders and staff in "creating safe, caring, and culturally responsive classrooms and schools. Students develop holistic skills to be productive and effective, caring, and responsible members of our community." She describes the mission of the district as a commitment to equity and excellence: We will provide every student with opportunities and support to demonstrate growth in foundational content and skills; communicate effectively, think critically, problem solve creatively, work collaboratively; be self-directed and persevering agents of their own learning; and demonstrate cultural awareness, an appreciation of self, empathy toward others, a sense of responsibility and commitment to civic engagement.

Staff Recruitment

Committee Member McCready emphasizes the critical importance of ensuring that prospective candidates for district positions should be able to demonstrate success in the areas of innovative, inquiry-oriented instruction; social-emotional learning; inclusive and culturally proficient instructional practices; the development of a positive school culture; and the ability to use data to assess and improve instruction. She restates the vision articulated in a poster hanging in every classroom and school office that was developed collaboratively by administrators and staff: "We won't stop until all students (a) Feel safe, connected, confident, valued, and honored for their uniqueness; (b) Think globally, deeply, creatively, and take ownership of their own learning; (c) Believe they can achieve their goals and their growth is unlimited; (d)

Know they are the center of a collaborative team of caring adults; and (e) Show pride to be part of the APS community."

She also suggests that Andover staff members are pioneers in education looking to re-invent and refine the ways in which education is delivered: "They understand that when children feel safe, valued, included, and connected (known/recognized) that this provides the foundation for the best possible learning. They are dedicated and committed to rework their instruction, recognizing that it takes practice to meet individual needs, and therefore, they must remain agile and open to refinement to meet students where they are."

A Recommendation to Educational Leaders of SEL

McCready reminds superintendents and other educational leaders: "Don't reinvent the wheel. Begin by understanding best practices and then prepare to adapt for your district. Be agile. Engage your teachers by giving them the SEL experience in order to understand its value. Educate your school board and other administrators on the value of SEL if necessary. It takes a district commitment to make this work."

Assessing Progress in SEL and CRP (Hannah Tolla, Director of Data, Accountability and Financial Analytics)

All of the Andover educational leaders interviewed for this case study reaffirmed the power and impact of careful progress monitoring as an essential component of SEL implementation. Andover's Director of Data, Accountability, and Financial Analytics, Hannah Tolla, emphasizes that data is essential for reinforcing the impact of SEL and its contribution to ensuring an engaging and equitable learning organization. She cites Tracey A. Benson's declaration in the College Board Equity 2000: What It Takes: Educational equity is present when: "all students can learn at high levels if provided with appropriate support in an environment of high expectations."

Tolla describes the wide range of monitoring and data collection tools used in Andover to assess the impact of SEL implementation, including the Panorama Climate and Competencies Surveys. Andover uses three of these surveys: (1) Student Competencies Surveys (Grades 3-5, 6-12) to measure students' social awareness, growth mindset, and grit; (2) Teacher Surveys, which track the district's commitment to educating all students, reinforcing a positive and collaborative school climate, the impact of professional learning upon SEL implementation, and resources for student support; and (3) Student Connectedness Surveys (Grades 3-5, 6-12) to monitor students' sense of belonging, safety, and engagement.

"What gets measured, gets managed," according to Peter Drucker. Tolla strongly concurs with Drucker and reinforces the importance of concrete data as a cornerstone of a data-driven organizational culture. She recommends that education leaders consider: (a) their context (racial/ethnic breakdown of staff, student subgroups, personal positionality); (b) who is represented in data and decision making; (c) who is not represented in data and decision making; (d) who is leading the work—including the necessity of difficult conversations

that a needs assessment coupled with a clear vision and mission will help drive the SEL work forward. Additionally, I think it is important to always consider all data points when making changes going forward. In addition to students' attitudes that may be captured in a survey, leaders should consider what other metrics have changed as a result of the SEL implementation process, including discipline, parent and community engagement, student college acceptance and matriculation, and student academic assessment performance. Much of the focus tends to be on students, but staff also need support with this work as well."

The importance of cultural sensitivity and responsiveness continues to be a major focus area for the Andover SEL implementation process. Tolla reminds educational leaders to "lead with the data and keep an open mind. The importance of cultural relevance throughout this work is always at the forefront of my mind. Schools are designed with a white-dominant, middle-class culture. Are the SEL strategies we are implementing respecting what is socially appropriate in other cultures or are we simply teaching students the way we would like them to interact?"

Concluding Remarks About SEL Leadership in Andover Public Schools

Sheldon Berman summarizes the leadership priorities related to SEL in his district:

1. Establishing equity as a priority

2. Creating a positive environment that is inclusive (e.g., Responsive Classroom)

3. Making certain that our curriculum is representative of the diversity of our society? (e.g., windows and mirrors reading program)

4. Utilizing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to make our curriculum accessible for all

5. Responding to the pandemic crisis and the equity issues we are facing as a result of it

6. Providing broad-based capacity and supports, including MTSS Tier 1, Tier 2, and more specialized Tier 3 supports

7. Building SEL leadership capacity in all administrators and leaders so that all students have a sense of belonging and connectedness to their community

8. Including parent voice through parent outreach and engagement and being open to dialogue with community, including structured and small-group discussions

9. Holding monthly meetings with PTO and Parent Advisory Council leaders, and visiting each school building

As one of the leaders concluded, "We have very engaged parents—and we are open to dialogue with them. We work hard at partnering with them."

when data suggests evidence of inequity or disproportionality; (e) what disaggregated data indicates about subgroups (including analysis of categorical performance by race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, and disability); and (f) what data points have not been typically measured.

Tolla also recommends that education leaders reinforce the use of multiple data sources when sharing results and conclusions, including student academic achievement data and college matriculation/persistence outcomes. She agrees with her colleagues that there should be a systemic commitment to distributing and discussing a range of SEL and cultural competency resources, including Ladson-Billing's Principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching.

In addition to ongoing use of the Panorama Survey to monitor organizational climate, the district has been reviewing and trying out a range of universal screeners to monitor students' progress. At the time of case study interviews, for example, the district was in the process of administering SSIS SEL pre- and post-testing. District leaders have also looked at the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) and Behavior Measurement Instrument. Tolla reinforces the importance of distinguishing between SEL screeners and mental health assessments. As a result of the pandemic, district leaders express a major need to identify students with mental health challenges and are looking for a mental health-oriented screening instrument.

The SEL Change Process from a Data-Driven Perspective

Tolla recommends that districts begin the SEL implementation process by taking an inventory of where they are currently, and what they hope to achieve. She states, "I always believed

★ HIGHLIGHTS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

1. Effective leadership for SEL involves all central office and school-based personnel in sharing a common vision, mission, and theory of action related to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and personalization that reinforce the social-emotional well-being of all members of the learning organization.

2. SEL leadership in a district must be holistic in its approach to addressing the needs and potential of the whole child, including students' physical and psychological growth and development, acquisition of communication and interpersonal relationship skills, and opportunities for civic engagement and service.

3. An effective superintendent ensures the sustained alignment between and among curriculum and instruction, assessment and progress monitoring, and social and psychological services, as well as community outreach and engagement.

? REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

1. What do you consider to be the most important structural components of SEL implementation in Andover Public Schools?

2. How do the principles and strategies for SEL leadership presented in this section align with your personal leadership philosophy and practice?

3. What are the implications of the ideas, strategies, and programs presented in this section for your work with SEL implementation in your district and school(s)?

SEL Leadership, Part III:
School-Based Leadership for Social-Emotional Learning and Culturally Responsive Practice

Panel Two

Implementation of Social-Emotional Learning and Culturally Responsive Practice: What Programs and Initiatives Have Supported the Effective Implementation of SEL Across the District?

- **Establishing a Responsive Classroom Community**: Jason DiCarlo, Principal, Sanborn Elementary School
- **Where Everyone Belongs Middle School Program**: Robin Wilson, Principal, Doherty Middle School
- **Personalizing the High School Schedule for SEL**: Philip Conrad, Principal, Andover High School
- **Integrating SEL into the Curriculum**: Adrianne Bock, Social Studies Program Coordinator
- **Systemic Response to Trauma and Mental Health Concerns**: Joe Yarid, Social Work Program Coordinator
- **Culturally Responsive Approaches to Literacy**: Sara Calleja, Literacy Program Coordinator K-5

Key Principles of School-Based SEL Leadership

This second panel focused on school-based leadership. Andover Public Schools has four strategic goals: Advance student learning through (1) caring and culturally responsive classrooms, (2) rigorous curriculum, (3) inclusive instruction, and (4) progress monitoring. In addition, the district maintains that in its instructional planning the social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum. According to Dr. Berman: "We must think about it in a coherent and cohesive way. We are examining our scope and sequence related to SEL—not just academics."

Additionally, the district reinforces four core practices associated with leading SEL implementation:

- Direct social skill instruction (conflict resolution, collaboration, resolving differences, taking others' perspectives);
- Integration into academic instruction;
- School and classroom climate and culture; and
- Providing all students with practical experience in the community (i.e., service learning and community service).

As a controlling principle of SEL implementation underlies leadership practices, Andover takes a systemic approach, ensuring alignment of programs, resources, and approaches that address each of the core practices at each level (elementary, middle, high).

The Relationship Between SEL and Culturally Responsive Classrooms

According to Joe Yarid, Andover's Social Work Program Coordinator: "We are in a fascinating time. We have a global pandemic—causing a lot of disruption for families and communities—as well as a growing movement of protests against abuse of power. We are having conversations about both of these with our families and students as well."

Respondents were unanimous in asserting that educators have an ethical responsibility to create systems and structures that dignify every human being. One participant quoted author Brene Brown: "We cannot maintain neutrality during times of

moral crisis." In the current national climate, it is even more critical that SEL and culturally responsive instruction be intimately tied together. Dr. Berman explains that "building an inclusive community requires cultural authenticity." That necessitates that classrooms and schools are identity-safe and enable students to feel comfortable and confident in making their cultural, ethnic and racial heritage present in the classroom.

Competencies such as self-awareness, social skills, empathy, and compassion connect us to each other in powerful ways, but community is built on the appreciation of diversity and the valuing of difference. Second-panel leaders reinforced that students share with us important information about who they are and how they feel. Priorities such as helping students feel safe and engaged, and building positive relationships in an identity-safe environment, are the starting points for SEL implementation.

Bringing SEL and CRP into Classrooms and Schools

Virtual case study participants in Andover were unanimous in emphasizing the critical relationship between SEL implementation and cultural responsiveness. Specifically, a culturally responsive classroom places the learner at the center of his/her learning process and reflects an ongoing focus on students' widely varying perspectives, traditions, and cultures. One respondent emphasized: "You must integrate the SEL skills with academic skills. Building and sustaining a positive learning community has always been a passion for me as an administrator/principal. Morning and closing meetings are essential. The morning meeting establishes a sense of belonging and connectedness, providing a structure to support the process of building community."

The morning meeting concept extends from the district's deep commitment to the use of the Responsive Classroom program as an essential part of all its K-5 elementary schools. Educators use a morning meeting process that includes greeting, morning message, sharing activity with a debriefing, and a setting of expectations for the day. Respondents were adamant that this process ensures the start of a positive and collaborative day. Moreover, it has been an integral part of recent protocols for virtual learning during school pandemic-related closings to provide continuity and connection among students.

Leaders must ensure that time is available for such meetings and therefore work to ensure that all elementary schedules have time built in for morning meetings at the beginning of the school day. Teachers are becoming highly adept at integrating content into morning meetings, reinforcing the power of integrating SEL into the curriculum implementation process.

In Andover middle schools, the district has developed and implemented a parallel program entitled Where Everybody Belongs (WEB), which was developed by The Boomerang Project. The WEB program integrates mentoring and student leadership with a major focus on ensuring students' ease of transition from elementary to middle school. For example, seventh-grade students apply and are trained to become student leaders (with voluntary training over the summer). These student leaders reach out to sixth-graders, introduce themselves, reassure the younger students, and continue in the role of coach and mentor for the rest of the year.

According to one middle school principal: "This first relationship is critically important: You feel as if you matter to someone. I care about you. These sixth-graders are coming together from a number of elementary schools. Our eighth-grade students greet them (virtually this year). They spend the day with sixth-graders. It is very student-centered—with administrators encouraged to stay away! These students do not have to be academic stars; by participating, they become passionate about making a difference. They develop a sense of self—using their words and voice in a positive way."

At the high school level, a Link Crew program is in place to help "create schools that not only teach students, but reach them emotionally as well." According to Philip Conrad: "Three middle schools come into an 1,800-student high school. Our student group reaches out to incoming eighth-graders. Our H-Block is a regular class period with as much time as any other course. H-Block is a personalization period in which students have the chance to meet with their teachers four times during an eight-day cycle. An additional H-Block in each cycle is an advisory period with a group of students and a faculty member who remain together throughout their four years in high school."

Conrad concluded with a powerful statement: "We are striving to create a curriculum that grows with our students. They need to be able to answer: How will my legacy make my school a kinder, more inclusive place?"

Integrating SEL and Cultural Responsiveness into the Andover Curriculum

This section of the Andover virtual tour emphasized two exemplary programs that reflect key principles of collaboration, self-regulation, and cultural responsiveness: the district's elementary social studies program, One Community, One Nation, and the district's commitment to culturally relevant literature as part of its commitment to reading comprehension and literacy.

One Community, One Nation extends the core social-emotional learning skills into the larger societal arena by teaching a range of civic dispositions that can be applied in social and political culture. These include commitment to social justice, individual responsibility, promotion of the common good, open-mindedness, critical mindedness, compassion, negotiation and compromise. The major themes of the program focus on community, culture and civics. The program utilizes an integrated approach bringing social studies, literacy and the arts together around big ideas and culturally responsive instructional practices.

Students use a case study approach even in the earliest grade levels, K-1, where they explore what it means to be a part of a community. In grade 2, they examine the meaning of culture and study four cultures from around the world. Grade 3 focuses on civics through studies of individuals and organizations that are making a difference. Grades 4 and 5 study the evolution of civil rights in the United States through historical cases related to religious liberty, dissent and the American revolution, the abolition of slavery, the abolition of child labor, the rights of immigrants, women's suffrage, the civil rights act of 1965, and the passage of legislation supporting the rights of individuals with disabilities.

In essence, the curriculum enables students to understand the meaning of community, appreciate a diversity of cultures, and know that they can make a difference to improve society. Strategies for teaching these concepts include a range of thinking routines identified by Harvard University's Project Zero program and exhibitions and performances of learning coming out of Brown University's Arts and Literacy Program.

Additional instructional strategies include students' investigation and analysis of historical artifacts, and cultural issues implicit in a range of case study reading selections embedded into each unit of study. The program also uses Kurt Wootton's Performance Cycle, which emphasizes building community, entering text, comprehending text, creating text, rehearsing/revising text, and performing text. As part of their social studies experience, students are encouraged to create stories and products as well as performances.

Similarly, Andover Public Schools has worked hard to build classroom libraries representing multiple cultures through diverse authors, characters and settings. Instructors are committed to helping students see themselves in the literature they read. Staff members supplement classroom libraries so that students can see themselves and each other doing all kinds of everyday things. As a result, students learn about people they might not typically interact with.

Participants described the literacy programs as windows into an unfamiliar culture and mirrors where you can see the reflection of your culture and yourself in the story. Teachers invite reflection and conversation about the themes in the stories. For example, as learners explore first-grade books from different cultures, they reflect on human challenges and a range of social issues: How does the character feel? How might you feel? Integrated into this process is a commitment to principles of equality and acceptance, including what it means to be different, the struggle for equality, love and family across cultures, and taking SEL out into the world.

SEL Leadership and Trauma-Informed and Trauma-Skilled Schools

Respondents were in consensus about the importance of schools and districts becoming sensitive to the impact of trauma in the lives of students and staff. This issue is becoming increasingly acute as educators wrestle with the social-emotional, physical, and psychological effects of the pandemic and related school closings.

Andover's approach to ensure that schools and districts are both trauma-informed and trauma-skilled emphasizes that trauma can take a range of forms from acute to chronic in both a personal and a community context. Presenters assert that "three to five percent of students come to our classrooms with a significant experience of trauma in their lives."

School-based leaders in the district suggest that interventions, supports, and services related to ameliorating the effects of trauma need to be based in the "climate and culture we are able to develop in our classrooms. We need to delve deeply into safety and relationships and how they are linked."

Andover leaders emphasize that in addition to the district's Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), they are using a model for trauma intervention developed by the University of New Hampshire entitled "RENEW." It is being used to meet the needs of identified Tier 3 students who demonstrate the potential to drop out. This person-centered model helps students have a voice in developing and focusing on their goals.

As one principal stated: "Our ultimate goal is to get all students to graduation and beyond."

Building Consensus About Criteria for Monitoring and Assessing the Impact of SEL Implementation and Culturally Responsive Practices (CRP)

Robin Wilson suggested that an essential part of the progress-monitoring process must be a focus on "the continuance and willingness of teachers and staff to keep this complex conversation going forward." She attributes Andover's SEL success to the long-range commitment of district leaders "to create programs for students and staff—as well as designing and implementing curriculum and transition programs like WEB that build on core ideas of belonging and relationships."

Participants reinforced that there are multiple indicators of the long-range impact of SEL and CRP, including a decrease in student truancies, the sense of cohesion and collaboration fostered by programs such as WEB, and a significant decrease in behavioral referrals. One principal suggested that these outcomes are the result of "opportunities for students to have a voice—their voice matters—an outlet to share their voice."

Presenters during this phase of the virtual site visit acknowledge that SEL and CRP have impacted all structural levels of the district, K-12. Philip Conrad, for example, cites the "impact on relationships that the new schedule and H-Block Advisory have had and the decrease in academic stress. These conditions allow students to learn more about topics of interest and get the extra help they need during the school day."

Throughout the K-12 system, principals also reinforce the changes implemented to the progress-monitoring and assessment systems in place within the district. Students,

for example, are now able to work together on project-based learning and exhibitions of learning such as the capstone presentations, resulting in a perceived positive impact on students' academic progress. Curriculum integration is another systemic priority, including such areas as the health curriculum, which allows educators to work SEL into curricula already operational within buildings—and expand that focus to other content areas in a holistic, integrated way.

Addressing the Challenges of SEL and CRP

Adrianne Bock: "Our teachers have been impacted by a tremendous amount of professional development on our One Community, One Nation curriculum, leading to unit creation and piloting. I think if we create authentic experiences and put the disciplines in service to each other, not only can we fit it all in, but we can go deeper, too. We are getting students engaged, curious, excited—all while learning."

Sara Calleja: "Our elementary literacy project was initiated during the period of remote learning. It allowed students to have a sense of belonging because we focused on their identities and lives."

Joe Yarid: "We have seen a powerful impact on teachers. They have benefited from the opportunity to receive an SEL Graduate Certificate from William James College. As a result, we have been running an SEL learning group across the district, K-12. We have had consistently good response, delving into elements of SEL including climate and culture within the classroom setting. We are also addressing issues related to trauma and culturally responsive practice. One of our school psychologists is running her own SEL study group as well."

Curriculum Leaders and Principals Offer this Feedback

Philip Conrad: "Leadership in SEL is critical for us. It's about having a shared vision and making sure you can explain the WHY. Reinforce the need for change, even though things seem to be working, by clearly explaining to students, parents, and teachers why this is important and what students will gain."

Adrianne Bock: "For me, priorities include inviting teachers into the process and listening and incorporating their thoughts and feedback, making sure teachers know they are important and are asked what they need. We also need to remember that change is hard and it takes time. Listening to the stakeholder voice is very important."

Sara Calleja: "Leaders must work closely with teachers, engaging hearts and minds in the work."

Joe Yarid: "Collaborating with staff and getting their input are key. It is also important to develop a coherent message and decide how we want to present it to parents and families. In my department, there are a lot of distractions (e.g., crises like the pandemic). These events have huge impact on mental health, on care, compassion, and empathy. Helping people to manage not only school, but their lives, must become a leadership priority."

Jason DiCarlo: "I agree with my colleagues about how important it is to ensure effective SEL and CRP implementation. We need to offer staff incentives, being clear about the benefits of this process. Both staff and students feel better when there is a sense of community and inclusiveness, and people have a voice."

Robin Wilson: "There must be a clear and sustained focus on building buy-in, collaboration, and collegiality. Leaders must meet teachers where they are. They should be free to learn with sometimes a gentle nudge. We must bring excitement and commitment to this process."

⭐ HIGHLIGHTS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

1. SEL implementation benefits from a clear and sustained focus on building students' ability to collaborate, socially interact, and self-regulate, including district-level implementation of the Responsive Classroom.

2. Early adolescent students are unique in their developmental and social-emotional needs, especially the need to feel part of a caring and nurturing learning community. Andover has adopted a "Where Everybody Belongs Middle School Program" as a result.

3. High school students benefit from opportunities to interact with peers, coaches, and mentors on a regular basis. Personalizing the high school schedule allows for regular advisory meetings as a consistent part of students' schedules.

4. SEL must become an organic and sustainable part of students' course of study. Therefore, Andover has integrated SEL as a key component of SEL implementation in all grade levels and content areas.

5. Systemic responses to trauma and mental health concerns must become a key priority for effective SEL leaders, especially in light of the current COVID pandemic.

6. Culturally responsive approaches to literacy require carefully selecting texts and encouraging culturally responsive strategies to be used in all phases of students' reading and literature programs, K-12.

❓ REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

1. What do you consider to be the key leadership implications of the ideas and strategies cited by these Andover principals and program leaders?

2. How do you define the term "culturally responsive practice"?

3. To what extent is your current district or school addressing the leadership priorities identified in this section of the case study?

4. Which of the programs and practices cited here seem especially significant or interesting for potential application to your learning organization?

5. To what extent do you consider your staff to be both "trauma-informed" and "trauma-skilled"?

6. How can your continuous improvement process address the priorities and potential issues associated with effective SEL and CRP implementation?

The Classroom Perspective: The Impact of SEL on Teaching and Learning

Panel Three

Social-Emotional Learning in the Classroom: How Have Teachers Effectively Brought Social-Emotional Learning into Their Classrooms and Schools?

- **Creating a Responsive Classroom**: Emily Allen, Grade 4 Teacher, High Plain Elementary School; Kate Gerry, Grade 1 Teacher, Bancroft Elementary School; Alia Mohammed, Grade 5 Teacher, West Elementary School; Patricia Xavier, ESL Teacher, Sanborn Elementary School
- **Where Everybody Belongs at the Middle School**: Norma Villarreal, Spanish Teacher, Wood Hill Middle School; Toni Ciaccia, ELA Teacher, West Middle School
- **Implementing an Effective High School Advisory Program**: John Jannetti, Science Teacher, Andover High School

Teacher Observations About the Importance of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Culturally Responsive Practices (CRP)

One teacher interviewed for this case study expressed powerfully the Andover philosophy of SEL and culturally responsive classrooms: "Children learn best when we treat them as human beings with social and emotional as well as academic needs." A primary goal in the district is to create caring and culturally responsive classrooms that are (1) rigorous in their approach to curriculum, (2) inclusive in their approach to instruction, and (3) balanced in their approach to progress monitoring (including assessing students' progress in both academics and social-emotional development).

Andover teachers were also unanimous in their assertion that the social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum: "We must be as conscious about structuring the social-emotional curriculum as we are about content-based curriculum." To achieve this goal, the district has identified four core elements:

- Direct social skill instruction;
- Integration into academic instruction;
- School and classroom climate and culture; and
- Practical experience in the community as well as service learning and community service.

All levels of the district (from elementary to high school) give students the opportunity to apply and practice social skills inside and outside the classroom.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Importance of Social-Emotional Learning

As fifth-grade instructor Alia Mohammed stated: "SEL and CRP are really big in Andover. We are committed to creating a family within our classroom with everyone having a sense of belonging and commitment. We also emphasize respecting and caring for one another. We encourage tackling problems within the classroom, including problem solving, literature analysis dealing with differences and cultures, and having tough conversations. As this collaborative culture grows, our students are more willing to take risks and collaborate in teams. This builds students' confidence and self-esteem."

Similarly, Patricia Xavier, an ESL instructor, explains: "I strongly believe students will not access the academic curriculum with their full potential unless they feel comfortable, accepted, and heard. As an ESL educator, culturally responsive practices are close to my heart and integrated into all aspects of our work, not a separate entity."

We see a recurrent emphasis upon integrating SEL, CRP, and a whole child approach to teaching and learning in other case study teacher participants, including Toni Ciaccia, a middle school English instructor who explains that "teaching is about relationships—forming relationships with students. SEL curriculum and practices help you to refine that and give everyone strategies to do that. I know the 'why' of SEL now as a result of my Andover experience."

Similarly, Norma Villarreal, a secondary Spanish instructor, contends: "If kids do not feel valued for who they are, they will

not value my curriculum or what I want them to accomplish. They must feel they are part of a community. I cannot access the richness of who they are and what they bring unless I make certain that they feel valued."

Finally, John Jannetti, a high school science teacher, asserts: "Having passed through the threshold of adolescence, students feel as if they are starting over at the high school level. SEL is critical to help them transition."

Observable Indicators of SEL and CRP in Andover Classrooms and Schools

Teachers interviewed for this case study were in agreement that certain universal strategies and practices should be observable when SEL is operational in a culturally responsive classroom, including:

1. SEL is present as a recurrent and integrated part of daily classroom procedures and climate, i.e., it is not a single "program," but is an essential part of culture building in a collaborative community of learning.
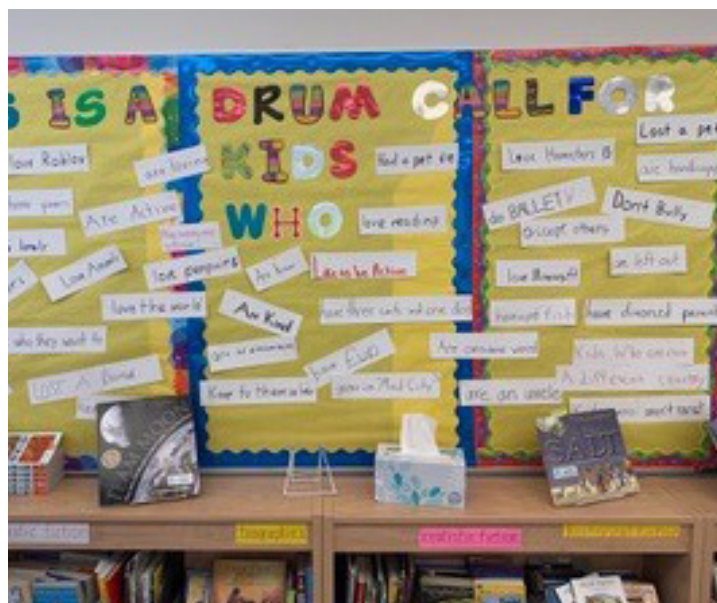
2. Lesson objectives integrate academic standards with clearly articulated social-emotional learning outcomes for every session.

3. Students are encouraged to be active monitors of their own progress, including self-regulation related to metacognition, collaboration, social interaction, and contribution to the classroom learning culture.

4. Didactic instruction is minimized with expanded focus upon collaboration and cooperative learning structures that reinforce the contributions of individual students as well as subgroups within whole-group learning.

5. Curriculum design and implementation reinforce students understanding of big ideas and essential questions, reinforcing their ability to analyze patterns, themes, and motifs that unify more discrete components of the content studied.

6. Ongoing structural components (e.g., morning meetings, closing meetings, advisories, coaching and mentoring sessions) reinforce students' sense of being a part of a caring and collaborative learning environment.

7. Opportunities are regularly available for students to debrief and reflect upon their learning process, including its affective and social-emotional components.

8. Learners are encouraged to make real-world connections and engage in authentic applications via performance-based assessment tasks and culminating projects.

9. Instructors monitor student progress and consistently use available Tier 2 and 3 MTSS interventions if students require additional support, coaching, and tutorials.

10. Throughout their education, students are encouraged to understand the value and significance of service learning and connectivity to their community and world.

Honoring the Teacher Voice in SEL Leadership and Implementation

Representative instructors from elementary, middle, and high school classrooms provided specific and powerful affirmation of the importance of SEL in their respective classrooms and schools. Following are selected statements that reinforce the value of distributed leadership in Andover Public Schools and the critical importance of making SEL a classroom priority:

Emily Allen (Grade 4): "I make SEL as important as academic learning in my classroom. It is the culture of my classroom and school, not a program. At the beginning, I try to establish a positive classroom community with a clear social, emotional and/or academic goal for each student. Their personal goals are placed on a hopes and dreams board with their picture. We set measurable steps for achieving it, replacing it with another when they achieve it.

"We also use "Friendship Ads" displayed outside our fourth-grade wing with answers to questions such as, 'What am I looking for during the new year? Here is what I will offer as a friend.' Students are encouraged to pick three to five people who will be a match for them. Each day, we also do 'Cheers for Classmates' to highlight random acts of kindness in the classroom or in school. We ask students to write them down on sticky notes and then we form an open circle sharing cheers for classmates.

"Every day, I also make certain that I greet students by name, taking a couple of seconds to feel the energy of the students and their preparation for learning, and consider if we need to connect with anyone. Each day starts with a morning meeting. We always do a fun activity or game. We end every morning meeting with a positive message for students as they go through the course of their day. I ask myself throughout the lesson: What did you notice? How has this affected our classroom management? I use this reflection to set a new goal for the next day."

Kate Gerry (Grade One): "Our morning meetings are extremely important with clear procedures and routines (e.g., come to rug hands free; sit crisscross applesauce hands in your lap; listen to the speaker; raise your hand to speak; one person talks at a time). Our RUG RULES include the following: raising hand, eyes looking, ears listening, hands still in lap, crosscross applesauce).

"We really emphasize student-centered instruction and experiential learning. For example, we use Guided Discovery Snap Cubes that students can take apart, make a pattern, and build things like a robot. We can also make letters. When we are finished, they need to snap back to 10 cubes. Finally, we always emphasize First Grade Hopes and Dreams: Everyone's dreams are displayed.

Patricia Xavier (English as a Second Language): "We reinforce SEL and CRP with our second language learners, including culturally responsive literature as well as parent-teacher home visits (using the Johns Hopkins University and RTI International models). Our focus on these key principles and programs has resulted in our ESL students doing better than in other communities. Also, teachers have changed their thinking about ESL students, just as our outreach to families has changed the families' thinking about school. Visits are voluntary, and educators are trained and compensated. We do not target students, which is an important value for teachers and administrators to consider."

Norma Villareal (Middle School Spanish): "Our district's focus on culturally responsive practice has supported our work with students studying world languages such as Spanish. At the middle school level, we have also expanded our focus on community building and collaboration through such early adolescent programs as Where Everyone Belongs and, at one site, the CREW advisory program."

John Janetti (High School Science): "Our high school advisory period has become really important in building a sense of community and belonging in our high school. It helps that Andover has included SEL into students' schedule by giving them regular opportunities to reflect, interact, collaborate, and receive coaching and mentoring from assigned teachers. Our science classrooms also emphasize experiential learning and authentic assessment as well as projects, helping our students experience what it feels like to get involved with science and interact with scientists and scientific processes."

HIGHLIGHTS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

1. SEL has become an integral part of the teaching-learning process in Andover Public Schools with a district-wide expectation that students feel safe, engaged, and supported by all teachers and staff.

2. SEL and culturally responsive classrooms are inextricably linked within the district, including a major focus on placing the learner at the center of his or her own learning process.

3. Andover's design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment involve a deep organizational commitment to students' sense of belonging within a safe, engaging, and welcoming learning community.

4. Classroom management in Andover has moved beyond traditional focus on teacher-controlled routines and regulations toward a greater emphasis on student voice and active involvement in reinforcing collaboration and social interaction.

5. SEL implementation is a K-12 instructional priority in Andover—from Responsive Classroom at the elementary level to advisory and support service programs at the secondary level.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

1. What do you consider to be the unifying SEL practices and strategies used by all Andover instructors?

2. As you reflect on the feedback provided by Andover teachers, what are the unique strategies and processes used at the elementary, middle, and high school levels?

3. How are teachers blending SEL, culturally responsive teaching and learning, and academic instruction in Andover classrooms?

4. What are specific classroom management strategies used in Andover that you find especially promising? Why?

5. If you were to share this section of the Andover case study with teachers and administrators, what would you emphasize?

6. To what extent does your current district or school offer similar strategies and processes to reinforce SEL and cultural responsiveness? Are there strategies unique to your district that would be helpful to other educational leaders?

Massachusetts Statewide Efforts to Promote Social-Emotional Learning: Perspectives on Cross-Institutional SEL Partnerships

Panel Four

How Have the State Department of Education, Organizations, and Universities Helped Promote and Facilitate the Effectiveness and Scalability of Social-Emotional Learning?

- **Setting State Goals**: Rachelle Engler Bennett, Associate Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- **Networking to Promote SEL:** Jim Vetter, Leadership Team, SEL Alliance for the U.S., Associate Director of Health & Technology, Education Department Center
- **Cross-District Collaboration to Support SEL**: Sara Krachman, Executive Director, Transforming Education
- **University Credentialing to Build Capacity for SEL Implementation**: Nadja Reilly, Associate Director, Freedman Center for Child and Family Development, William James College

Massachusetts Statewide Efforts to Promote Social-Emotional Learning

Superintendent Shelley Berman began this session by stating that: "We will meet leaders in Massachusetts who have created the environment and support to move the SEL initiative forward. This work is characterized by collegiality and teamwork, collaborative support, guidance on strategies, and permission for districts to do this work. As a result, in our state SEL has become a statewide initiative and is an essential part of the state educational system as well as being an essential component of partnerships with universities and state organizations."

All presenters agreed that children learn best when we treat them as human beings with social and emotional as well as academic needs, a key tenet of A Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope (Aspen Institute and the National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development). Massachusetts reinforces the importance of the social curriculum in relationship to academic achievement. Students must acquire and deepen their social, collaboration, and advocacy skills to take this SEL work further into society. Schools and districts must engage students in understanding how to resolve conflict and build a more just and peaceful world as a result.

The state leaders who participated in this panel discussion all agreed on the value of SEL as a conduit for student success and well-being. Jim Vetter, for example, leads the SEL Alliance for Massachusetts, which opened in 2011 with "Champions for SEL in Massachusetts." Vetter began his remarks by explaining: "District leaders like Shelley Berman came together and decided that if we work together, we can support each other, promote effective practices, and advocate for policies related to SEL. Through our convenings, we had a chance to get people together and access SEL resources, such as practice-based documents produced by the ASPEN Institute."

Sara Krachman, Executive Director of Transforming Education, concluded: "We emphasized reading and math as part of state and national accountability efforts, but that did not resonate for me at a human level. When I asked what people wanted out of an educational experience, they wanted students to take the perspective of others, express empathy, and demonstrate other social skills. We need young people to use SEL skills and critically examine and effect change in the world. We

partner with school systems to foster the development of the whole child, especially underserved children."

Nadja Reilly, Associate Director of the Freedman Center for Child and Family Development at William James College, concurred with her colleagues and stressed the value of district-university collaboration: "We offered the first certification program in the U.S. William James College has deep commitment to preventing social and emotional disturbance and conducts extensive research in creating systemic change. Our college is committed to helping teams of educators use SEL as a way of creating systemic change and breaking down siloes. A major focus is on behavioral health and learning in a holistic way—not through separate programs or focus areas."

Strategic SEL Goals Developed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Rachelle Engler Bennett, Associate Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, reinforces that social-emotional learning is now one of five major goals identified and supported by the department: "We must prepare all students for success in school, post-graduation, and life, including careers and civic participation. SEL competencies are a key driver in this realm."

As part of this initiative, the state has strengthened standards as a key component of effective curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Massachusetts promotes educator development related to classroom and school support for social emotional learning, health, and safety. The state has also undertaken a multi-year commitment to turning around the lowest performing districts and schools by enhancing equitable resource allocation and data use.

This process includes publication of the Commissioner's Our Way Forward Report, which advocates for deeper learning for all, holistic support and enrichment, innovation and evidence-based practice. The state has committed to becoming a partner with districts, including resource allocation, professional development, and legislative policy in support of SEL. Currently, for example, Massachusetts has laws focusing on organizational culture and climate in alignment with other accountability initiatives. Associate Commissioner Bennett identified multiple statewide SEL programs and initiatives, including:

- A statewide motto for SEL: ***Integrate, Create, Engage***
- Commitment to strengthening SEL competencies in all initiatives and resource documents
- Development of specific guidance and professional development opportunities to strengthen SEL competencies in students and adults
- Engagement of mental health and other service providers in SEL-related statewide academies
- Curriculum integration in which all revisions of curriculum frameworks incorporate SEL competencies, particularly the state's comprehensive health framework
- Reinforcement of SEL as the underpinning of the state's and districts' Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

- Creation of a statewide website and newsletter related to SEL
- Development of SEL piloting resources for early grades as well as exploration of the intersection of SEL and equity
- Emphasis on SEL via the Massachusetts Educational Development Center, Transforming Education, and school closure documents and guidelines, as well as integration of SEL into the state Mental Health Academy (networking)
- Launch of a School Mental Health Initiative in fall 2020
- Collaboration on SEL with CASEL, with other states, and with other state departments of education

Cross-Organizational Promotion and Strengthening of SEL Work in Massachusetts

State leaders interviewed for this case study were highly consistent in their support of cross-functional collaboration, communities of practice, and shared investigation of problems of practice. They were also clear that districts benefit from clearly articulated operational language (with clear and research-based conceptual definitions for key elements of SEL), as well as extensive opportunities for ongoing SEL-related professional development.

A major partner with the Andover Public Schools has been William James College, which offers a 15-credit SEL professional development program that uses a blended learning approach (i.e., four weekends in residence combined with online learning). Nadja Reilly identified multiple recurrent structural components of this certification program. She emphasized that to maximize sustainability and scalability, the William James College SEL professional development program includes:

- A nine-month train-the-trainer model
- Close interaction with the district superintendent
- Development of a consensus-driven action plan to reinforce a three-to-five-year strategic planning process
- Opportunities for collaborative work with other school districts, reinforcing a Professional Learning Community model (including development of professional learning communities, ongoing communication with teams, and ongoing coaching to support team members' analysis of their district's SEL work in comparison to what other districts are doing)
- Systems orientation for the design of participating school teams, including two teachers, one administrator, and one mental health staff member
- 15 graduate credits awarded by the Department of School Psychology

Evaluation studies of this program confirm that there is an increase in participant learning related to SEL as well as an increase in confidence related to their work. As a result of the program, many participants confirm that it helps them make SEL an integral part of daily practice. The embedded training program also supports their understanding and skill in facilitating SEL implementation in their district and school.

Participants emphasized that Andover Public Schools has greatly increased SEL implementation by building consensus and putting into action the following lessons and controlling principles:

- Successful SEL implementation requires intentionality, prevention, and a systemic approach.
- In addition to emphasizing research-based principles from learning science, SEL must take into account the large body of research related to prevention and reduction of trauma.
- Educators need a learning mindset to approach and succeed in implementing SEL, including understanding and reinforcing strategies for building psychological safety and trust.
- Successful SEL leaders reinforce the value of culturally responsive practices, ensuring that all students feel supported, have one or more adults they can confide in and trust, and can see themselves in the curriculum they are studying.
- Progress monitoring and evaluation of SEL impact must be data-driven in its approach. The district must have clearly articulated SEL performance standards and determine the correlation between student growth and achievement based upon identified SEL strategies used in classrooms and schools.
- An SEL-compatible learning organization must reinforce professional discourse about SEL. It should be ongoing and intentional, ensuring that staff talk to one another, share successful strategies, and resolve shared problems of practice.

Superintendent Berman emphasizes that leaders must be aware of a vulnerability frequently seen in SEL professional development. A key goal should be depth of understanding as opposed to superficial coverage. He asserts that professional learning related to SEL can lack depth, e.g., attending a one-day workshop is not sufficient. He emphasizes: "Teachers going through this program have come out with a deep understanding. It has been transformative for a majority of Andover staff, increasing their SEL understanding, motivation, engagement in the change processes, and awareness of potential vulnerabilities in evidence-based practices."

The Power of Cross-District SEL Initiatives

Sara Krachman, Executive Director of Transforming Education, emphasizes the power and value of building cohorts to support effective SEL implementation. According to Krachman: "As we talk to district leaders, they know SEL development matters, but they need to know how to get started. What does SEL

look like in action? How can leaders provide coherence and alignment?"

Krachman strongly suggests that the long-range goal for SEL is to build capacity in district leaders related to the needs of educating the whole child. Leaders must start with mapping and analyzing current SEL-related assets by forming a whole child team, including determining scaled practices already in place as well as pressing areas of need. She suggests that leaders reinforce how a whole child approach integrates with academics, child support, and family engagement. She also recommends that districts start with a few schools to make sure that team-determined whole child strategies are tangible and practical to educators.

Active learning experiences are also necessary to build leadership teams, including using exemplars to build muscle memory so that teams can bring change to other schools when members leave. This process typically takes two to three years, and Krachman is clear that "not every district is ready to dive in that deeply." Krachman's organization, Transforming Education, has created a multi-district collaboration to advance SEL. The project, entitled ExSEL, brings together teams from ten districts in each of several cohorts to participate in shared professional development and networking. Krachman suggests that effective state-level and national efforts involving SEL implementation center around the following recommendations:

1. **Consider Two Approaches Frequently Used in SEL Implementation**: (a) A multi-district and cross-functional team approach using local agencies and community partners; and (b) a curriculum mapping process in which a single district determines where SEL is already present within the teaching-learning process—and other areas where gaps may need to be addressed.

2. **Capitalize on the Power of SEL Networking**: Krachman's Transforming Education organization has utilized three strategic partnerships and support systems to advance SEL statewide: (a) The ExSEL network's partnership with the Massachusetts School Superintendents Association; (b) partnerships with state and federal educational departments and organizations, including the Educational Design Center and federal school climate and transformation grants (e.g., ENGAGE Strategy, Massachusetts Department of Education); and (c) convening of teams of school leaders who commit multiple days of collaborative professional development, and who are also able to access a dedicated technical assistance liaison offering up to 40 hours per year of consultation to address identified needs.

3. **Use a Team-Based Approach to SEL Implementation Within the District**: (a) Tailoring SEL focus areas to meet the needs of the individual district while building capacity and reinforcing continuous improvement; (b) offering multiple convenings of teams during the year (including opportunities for cross-district discourse and collaboration) with planning time allotted; and (c) creating an embedded coaching model within the district itself.

4. **Help Staff to Become Knowledgeable About National-Level SEL Work**: (a) Currently 12 states across the country are engaged in SEL-funded whole child mapping initiatives to ensure alignment and cross-state communication and leadership; (b) Jim Vetter identified multiple SEL advocacy initiatives, including the SEL Alliance for Massachusetts, as part of the United States SEL4US.org partnership alliance; and (c) it is critically important to build networks and collaborative partnerships involving grass roots organizations and to promote them across the state of Massachusetts as part of a growing national network.

5. **Concentrate on Four Primary Drivers**: (a) Promote public awareness at the school, district, and community levels, showcasing demonstrated effects and long-range impact of SEL implementation; (b) build support for SEL through the showcasing of research-based best practices; (c) provide extensive professional learning; and (d) advocate for state and local policies and funding to support SEL.

State Leaders' Reflections on the Impact of SEL Work on Districts' Ability to Move Forward

Like all participants in this case study, state leaders on this panel were unanimous in confirming the power of SEL as a catalyst for educational transformation, organizational change, and continuous improvement:

Sarah Krachman: "Cohorts are working on strategic plans for SEL implementation. The value being placed on networking is paramount. District leaders seem to be growing in their appreciation for the opportunity to learn from one another. Hands-on support has resulted in improvement in student and staff reporting on organizational climate. Self-reported measures can be tricky, so district and school leaders' changing knowledge and awareness of whole child Development are making a positive change in their districts."

Nadja Reilly: "We have the teams evaluate Level of Collaboration. This process is a significant driver in educational change, both collectively and individually. We are seeing a renewed focus on the meaning of "evidence based." Evidence for effectiveness is becoming increasingly sophisticated, with leaders and staffs investigating: What was our evidence normed on? What was the population assessed? Leaders are increasingly committed to examining research literature from that perspective as well. Stamina is built and continued when there is a team behind educational leaders. They feel empowered to drive change. They also realize now that this is a long-term effort."

Rachelle Engler Bennett: "At the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, we work to support schools and organizations across the state, but we look for smaller opportunities where we can learn from one another and translate ideas into action. We emphasize the Plan-Do-Study-Act approach and highlight lessons learned. We encourage districts to start small and build on SEL challenges and successes, scaling them to individual districts and statewide. We are also continually scaling efforts to move in a helpful direction together."

Jim Vetter: "Advocacy is turning into legislation. It is encouraging to see heightened levels of support for SEL, including joining a network or starting one. The Teachers 21 program and William James College are examples. Thirty-six hundred people are now on the network list and there are 26,000 Twitter followers. We can see the impact when we come together. Networks of individual leaders, teachers, mental health professionals, and parents are forming. There is also currently a bill increasing teacher licensure related to SEL. When a strong network is built, we can say to legislators that there is a bill coming up. I've heard legislators say: 'Lots of your members have been emailing me about your bill… These educational practices are really in the best interest of the child.' "

The Relationship Between SEL, Culturally Responsive Practice, and Equity

Increasingly, national discourse has centered upon issues of inequity, structural racism, and disproportionality related to students' access to rigorous academic programs and educational resources. State leaders on the panel strongly confirm a direct relationship between SEL implementation and the power of districts to address these issues.

Panelists' Conclusions and Recommendations

1. **Avoid Misunderstandings and Misconceptions**: Several panelists emphasized that SEL is not about controlling emotions or reinforcing some sense of organizational norms and control rooted in white cultural norms. Educational leaders and staffs must engage in courageous conversations about issues of conformity and compliance and determine the meaning of inclusive norms. Liberative practices recognize multiple strengths. This recognition is critical, just as understanding and addressing issues of trauma is becoming increasingly a part of SEL work.

2. **Adopt a Transformational Approach to the Power and Impact of SEL**: Schools must be supported in becoming "identity-safe." Educators must view SEL as developmental work to promote liberation and social justice since the two are inextricably linked. They must also practice self-awareness and have the ability to empathize with and take the perspective of others, especially students. We must understand overt and covert systems of oppression that American education has inadvertently reinforced.

3. **Ensure Sustained Professional Learning**: All participating leaders emphasized that professional development is essential. It should be collaborative, differentiated, and personalized—and should help adults engage in meaningful conversations with one another and with students about needed changes and the origins of implicit bias and structural inequities. Rachelle Engler Bennett confirmed: "I fully support these points. We must have an equity lens to avoid perpetuating a white cultural paradigm and individualism. Equity goals without SEL competences will not allow us to be fully effective in addressing bias and dismantling racism and structural inequalities."

4. **Apply Tools and Strategies for Building Relationship Skills**: SEL equity work must take into account and address the leveraging of multiple identities of students and staff. Learning is for everyone. Panelists agreed that we often are so focused on students that we don't focus on adults. What we do individually and how we work in organizations and agencies to promote equity and institutional goals are critical issues for leaders to consider. Leaders and staffs must learn to have courageous conversations and find ways to incorporate those issues into continuous

improvement processes. We must be speaking our truth, staying engaged, and accepting areas where there may not be agreement in order to productively move on together.

5. **Incorporate Key Building Blocks of Aligning SEL, Cultural Responsiveness, and Equity**: Panelists strongly agreed that this work needs to start with us as adults, looking at our own racism, not as a fixed identity but a provocation for action. Hopefully, we can all learn to engage in anti-racist actions. This requires a whole process of self-reflection, including areas in which there may have been failures. Panelists made the following suggestions about key building blocks:

- Listen to and reflect on recommendations from the leaders of color and other anti-racist leaders who have been doing the work for a long time.
- Make use of school committees responsible for developing and promoting equity policies and anti-racism within the district.
- Use SEL as an empowerment model, not a reinforcement of obedience or compliance.
- Make use of tools for assessment of inequitable

practices: How do we determine progress at a school level? How can we encourage staff self-reflection? How can we have courageous conversations with key stakeholder groups?

- Offer coursework and professional development on looking at the story the data is telling. Take stock of what you have at the moment. Is the data you have answering the questions you want to have answers to? What other questions should we explore?
- Emphasize wide and deep assessment: Are all resources allocated equitably across tiers and district? Are they aligned for maximum effectiveness? Are programs and approaches used eclectically? Is there consistency and coordination across programs? Are we providing the proper "dosage"?
- Engage in root-cause analysis underlying the data: Use that approach to develop and implement an early-warning system for students at-risk.
- Strengthen district-level systems of support, including relationship mapping between students and adults. Consider the domains being looked at, the strengths and needs of individual students, and additional supports that may be required.
- Ensure that you have sufficient and sustainable support structures to follow through on action steps to address identified gaps and issues surfaced by your approach to data analysis.

State Leaders' Advice on Moving Forward with the SEL Implementation Process and the Inevitable Organizational Changes That Accompany It

Rachelle Engler Bennett: "Continually look at ways to engage students and staff and families in understanding their perspectives about strengths, challenges, and concerns. Provide opportunities to strengthen SEL competencies…and to partner with others."

Sara Krachman: "Think about the power you have to change systems and structures in the district. For example, how can you change them to create advisories for students? Find opportunities to loop faculty with students over multiple years. Build collaborative teams for teachers."

Jim Vetter: "For district leaders, don't try to do it alone. Distributed leadership via school-based teams is critical. Communities of practice can be really helpful. Join or start a network."

Nadja Reilly: "As a leader, make sure you have three things: curiosity (coming in with an open learning mindset); vulnerability to embody and model SEL competencies; and courage (to do things such as put teachers' SEL health above a new math curriculum). Find trusted adults who can bolster and encourage you. You can move whole systems forward with this approach."

⭐ HIGHLIGHTS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

1. The State of Massachusetts has developed and is implementing state-level goals for social-emotional learning to ensure that all school districts address students' social, emotional, physical, and psychological development.

2. A major statewide commitment in Massachusetts is to building communities of practice and collaborative networks that support SEL and reinforce cross-functional teaming and communication about the work.

3. Andover Public Schools engages in cross-district collaboration to share insights and recommendations about SEL best practices, exemplary programs, and solutions to identified problems of practice.

4. A major component of cross-functional teaming and organizational collaboration involving SEL is the process of university credentialing to build capacity for SEL implementation.

❓ REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

1. As you reflect upon the feedback and recommendations of Massachusetts state leaders of SEL, what do you consider to be especially important ideas and take-aways that you might share with others in your district or school?

2. What are the major SEL-related programs and initiatives in your state that your district is a part of—or could become a participant in?

3. How do you and your staff view the relationship between and among SEL, cultural responsiveness, and equity?

4. To what extent do your current curriculum standards (based upon state frameworks) align with and reinforce students' development of social-emotional learning skills and dispositions?

5. How can you and your staff maximize your use of networking, collaboration, and cross-functional teaming to support SEL implementation in your district or school?

6. To what extent are there cross-district collaborative efforts underway in your area addressing issues of equity and disproportionality? How are you using—or could you use—SEL strategies and practices to enhance these efforts?

7. How are you making use of college and university credit options to provide a comprehensive approach to SEL professional development for your staff?

Implications of the Andover Case Study for SEL Implementation in Other Districts

We conclude this case study of Andover Public Schools by asking educational leaders to consider the following questions about their own district's work with SEL. These may be useful if you are beginning a dialogue with staff about the importance of SEL as a key component of student achievement and well-being. The list can also be used as a tool for identifying potential problems of practice if you are already involved with the SEL implementation process in your school or district.

1

SEL Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles

- Have you developed a vision for SEL in your district?
- Does your district mission statement reflect SEL principles and priorities?
- Are your SEL vision and mission embodied in your district's theory of action and strategic plan?
- Are there clearly articulated guiding principles for SEL implementation in your district to guide and inform the work?

2

Sustained SEL Professional Capacity-Building

- Are you ensuring that all staff members have been adequately informed and supported to enable them to invest in the SEL implementation process and understand its relationship to student achievement?
- Do all staff members have continuing opportunities to learn about SEL strategies and techniques they can implement in their respective roles and positions?
- Are you building an SEL leadership team to ensure sustainability of this initiative?
- Are professional development initiatives in place to address the long-term effects of trauma upon both students and staff, including moving staff along a continuum from "trauma-informed" to "trauma-skilled"?
- Are there incentives in place (including professional development points, graduate program certification, or credit options) to motivate sustained professional learning in SEL, cultural responsiveness, and equity?

3

Aligning Policies and Practices for SEL, Cultural Responsiveness, and Equity

- Have you identified existing policies and regulations that support or can be modified to support SEL, cultural responsiveness, and equity?
- Does your district have a clear operational definition and guiding metrics to monitor progress and ensure sustainability and scalability of your work with equity?
- Are there areas in which policies and regulations might be developed and/or enhanced to improve equity, student achievement, and social-emotional well-being?
- Is there consensus in your district about strategies, practices, and programs that support and reinforce SEL as a key component of student achievement and equity?
- In what ways is your learning organization committed to the concept of teaching the "whole child," including his/her physical growth and development, nutrition, health and well-being, academic progress, and civic responsibility?

4

SEL Professional Norms

- To what extent does your organization formally set norms of communication and collaboration and your organizational culture reinforce and enhance professional discourse, collaboration, and cultural responsiveness?
- Are all staff aware of the importance of being culturally responsive and dignifying the experiences and traditions of their students?
- Does professional discourse and collaboration in your school or district reflect a commitment to ensuring equity and excellence for all learners?
- Do classrooms in your school(s) reinforce students' sense of belonging and learning in a collaborative and engaging environment?

5

Classroom Management and SEL

- To what extent do your teachers approach management and discipline in a developmental and restorative rather than a procedural way?
- Are student discipline and behavior issues used as opportunities for self-reflection and growth on the part of the learner and the instructor?
- Are learners encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and their treatment of others?
- Do instructors provide regular opportunities for students to discuss classroom operations, norms, behaviors, and areas of strength as well as potential improvement?
- How are all students coached in strategies and processes to enhance their capacity for self-regulation, impulse control, and conflict resolution?
- To what extent is discipline focused on learning from mistakes and restoring relationships rather than punishment?

SEL-Infused Curriculum

6

- Is SEL implementation considered an essential part of curriculum design and implementation?
- To what extent does your district or school avoid a program-based approach as the sole avenue for SEL implementation instead embrace holistic approach?
- Are there clearly articulated performance standards for each grade level to support the SEL progress monitoring process?
- Are there clear SEL goals and learning targets integrated into teachers' lesson planning?
- Do units and lessons enhance student-teacher and student-student collaboration, inquiry, engagement, and civic responsibility?

SEL-Driven Teaching and Learning

7

- Are students at the center of their own learning process (with staff avoidance of a "coverage" approach to content delivery)?
- To what extent do all classrooms encourage student voice and perspective?
- Do instructors follow a variation of the 10-2 rule, i.e., no more than 10 minutes of presentation or direct instruction before students have a chance to self-reflect, interact, or engage in application of content and skills taught in the lesson?
- Do classroom assignments reinforce cultural responsiveness?
- Are multiple modalities and approaches used to engage student interest and sense of purpose and authenticity, i.e., small groups, cooperative learning, independent projects, culminating performance assessments, collaborative presentations, etc.?
- Are textbooks, support materials, and resources culturally responsive and designed to encourage differentiation and personalization of learning?
- To what extent do all learners have the resources and technology (e.g., internet access, help-desk access, Chromebooks, computers) they need for distance/remote learning?

SEL Assessment and Progress Monitoring

8

- Do all lessons have a clear SEL objective or performance target?
- To what extent do all instructors integrate SEL progress monitoring into their formative and summative assessment design?
- Is there evidence of balanced approaches to assessment, including decreasing evidence of selected-response testing in favor of performance-based assessments and culminating projects?
- Are students asked to monitor their own progress against clear performance targets?
- Do all teachers provide opportunities for students to assess and monitor their social-emotional responses to assignments and task completion?

9 Building a Community of Care and Support for Students

- What ongoing structures are in place to support the development and sustainability of caring classroom communities?
- Does every student feel supported and encouraged as part of the school and classroom community of learning?
- To what extent does your Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) emphasize Tier 1 core curriculum and instruction for all learners, including an engaging and culturally responsive course of studies?
- How does your school or district design, provide, and monitor Tier 2 (short-term) and Tier 3 (long-term) interventions related to students' literacy development, mathematical proficiency, and behavior?
- Do students have the range of support services—including social and psychological services and college and career preparation services—they need to address their needs and goals?

10 Promoting Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community

- How do you and your staff support family and community understanding of and engagement in your efforts to promote SEL?
- To what extent are there public forums, discussions, and development opportunities in which parents and community members can participate to enhance their understanding of SEL?
- How does your district or school partner with service agencies and community groups to ensure maximum family access to such services as nutrition and health programs, and social and psychological services?
- To what extent is there collaboration between the school or district and out-of-school-time organizations in areas of professional development of staff, consistency of program implementation and SEL language, and resource sharing?

11 Integrating SEL into Operations and Management

- To what extent does your annual budget ensure resources and financial support for your district's or school's work with SEL?
- How do operations and fiscal management in your district or school ensure that areas or gaps related to disproportionality are addressed and eliminated?
- To what extent does your annual budget ensure maximum student access to resources, broadband access, and technology to support distance learning?
- Are you taking advantage of grant and philanthropic funding available to enhance your work with SEL, cultural responsiveness, and equity?
- Is your approach to budget allocation reflective of an equity perspective, i.e., ensuring that all students have what they need to learn, including those students who may require additional resources and support services to "level the playing field"?

12 SEL and Continuous Improvement

- Are SEL, cultural responsiveness, and equity key drivers in your strategic planning and continuous improvement process?
- How does your continuous improvement process ensure that achievement gaps and areas of disproportionality are successfully addressed?
- To what extent do your district strategic plan and school improvement plans address data gaps in the areas of SEL, cultural responsiveness, and equity?

The RAND Corporation Study

Lessons from the Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative (Volume 1): "Early Lessons from Schools and Out-of-School Time Programs Implementing Social and Emotional Learning"
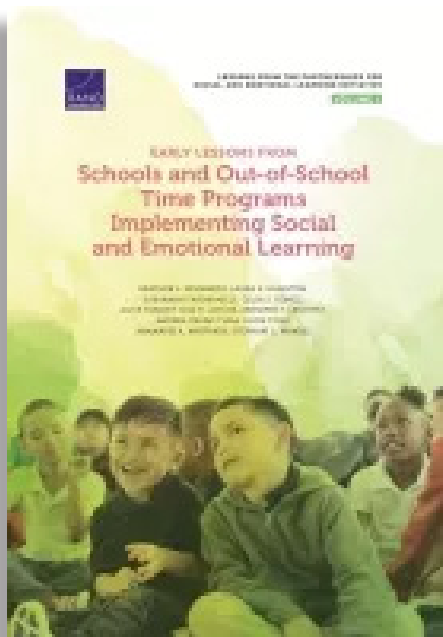
At the time of the completion of the AASA Andover Public Schools Case Study process, the RAND Corporation published an important synthesis of "lessons learned" about SEL in elementary schools and out-of-school-time (OST) programs.* Although Andover was not one of the six communities profiled in this RAND study, we felt it would be beneficial for readers to see the powerful parallels between RAND conclusions and Andover's longitudinal work with SEL. Following is a brief synthesis of the ways in which Andover reflects key RAND research study recommendations.

*Schwartz, H.L., L.S. Hamilton, S. Faxon-Mills, C.J. Gomez, A. Huguet, L.H. Jaycox, J.T. Leschitz, A.P. Tuma, K. Tosh, A.A. Whitaker, & S.L. Wrabel, *Lessons from the Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative*, **vol.1,** *Early . . . Learning* **(Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020).**

Key RAND report focus recommendations are highlighted below in bold with accompanying bulleted commentary on the alignment of SEL implementation in Andover Public Schools with those recommendations.

1. **Executing system-level activities to launch and coordinate SEL across multiple sites (RAND Study, page xiii):**

   - Andover has developed and sustains a clear vision, mission, and guiding principles for SEL.
   - The district has articulated desired "look-fors" to support sustainability and scalability.
   - To ensure district-to-school and partnership communication regarding SEL, staffing allocations have been configured to ensure that both central office and school-based personnel are responsible for facilitating leadership and professional development in all aspects of SEL implementation.
   - The district has engaged in a longitudinal process of vision, mission, and guiding principle articulation combined with sustained professional learning, including attention to multiple-session SEL induction for new staff.
   - Recent COVID-19 pandemic closings have reinforced Andover's capacity for resilience and creativity in the face of distance learning and in-person schooling modifications and enhancements.

2. **Developing district out-of-school time intermediary (OSTI) and school out-of-school time partnerships (RAND Study, page xiii):**

   - The Andover Public School System has actively engaged university as well as business and community partners in supporting the SEL implementation process in the district.
   - Central office and school-based staff work closely with community partners to ensure consensus and cross-functional teaming to enhance and scale-up SEL implementation initiatives and processes.
   - As a need becomes apparent, Andover district leaders have ensured flexible adaptation of SEL implementation to ensure ease of partner support, time, resources, and understanding about the value and components of SEL implementation.
   - The school district works closely with university and community partners to ensure that there is a balanced power differential between and among district, school-based, and out-of-school time organizational activities.
   - District and school-based educators and partner group members model SEL best practices, rituals, routines, and instructional practices that are consistent with effective SEL implementation.
   - The district has made certain that the K-12 curriculum approaches SEL through an integration process rather than as a "separate" or "stand-alone" program.

3. **Developing adults' capacity to promote SEL (RAND Study, page xvii):**

   - As recommended in the RAND study, Andover Public Schools has modeled the practice of ensuring that adult learners understand and support SEL before SEL practices and programs are implemented in a school site.
   - Andover has demonstrated a longitudinal commitment to effective SEL professional development, ensuring that all teachers, support staff, and administrators understand the impact of SEL upon student efficacy and achievement.
   - SEL professional development in Andover Public Schools has included a variety of approaches and modalities, including district-level SEL orientations, coaching, and mentoring for new hires; sustained school-based SEL professional learning; and university-credit certification programs offered by William James College.
   - The school district makes a concerted effort to showcase professional best practices, including providing opportunities for successful educators to engage in demonstration and lessons and professional development presentations, as well as peer coaching and mentoring.

4. Improving climate and delivering SEL instruction to students (RAND Study, page. xix):

- Andover ensures that SEL rituals and routines are evident and consistently reinforced in all classrooms (e.g., morning meetings, closing meetings, middle school Where Everybody Belongs [WEB] program, and high school advisory).

- Direct instruction and coaching of students to develop and apply key SEL competencies (e.g., self-management, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, social and civic awareness and service) are a part of all students' education, K-12.

- There is clear and consistent evidence about the integration of SEL competencies and performance standards in content and grade-level curriculum.

- The district avoids a "stand-alone" approach to SEL curriculum and instruction, ensuring that all content areas and grade levels integrate SEL into daily classroom practice.

- Disaggregated data analysis is an integral part of Andover's continuous improvement and strategic planning process, including administration of the Panorama Survey to chart progress in fostering positive school climate, a sense of belonging, safety and engagement, and students' social awareness, growth mindset, and grit.