



2018-19

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# Wisconsin Social and Emotional Learning

## Case Study: Stoughton Area School District

June 2019

**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**

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Madison, Wisconsin

# Wisconsin Social and Emotional Learning Case Study

District Name

## Introduction/Background

### **HISTORY**

The Stoughton Area School District (SASD) is a rural district located outside of Madison. Enrollment is 3023 students in grades 4K-12 across 5 school buildings (elementary K-5, Middle School 6-8, High School 9-12): Sandhill Elementary (464 students), Fox Prairie Elementary (399 students), Kegonsa Elementary (321 students), River Bluff Middle School (663 students), and Stoughton High School (972 students). Student population is made up of 82% white, 6% Hispanic, 3% black, and 4% two or more races. Additional demographics are 27% of students qualifying as economically disadvantaged, 3% EL and 15% students with disabilities.

The three elementary schools have implemented Second Step and various social emotional learning (SEL) curricula for several years. However, the scope and sequence was determined at the individual school level and the district lacked consistency in implementation. The middle school had not implemented a universal SEL curriculum in several years. A system wide approach to SEL implementation, including consistency between elementary schools, middle school SEL delivery, and SEL integration/generalization throughout the school day by all staff was an identified gap. Additionally, information gleaned from a recent needs assessment and student and parent/guardian focus groups indicated a need to provide systematic and focused mental health, wellness, and social emotional learning opportunities across grade levels within a multi-tiered level of support. Overwhelmingly, staff and parents also reported a need for educational opportunities, especially those who interact with youth who have mental health and/or behavioral challenges and past trauma.

### **THE MODEL**

During the 2018-19 school year, we received a grant through the Department of Public Instruction to focus on mental health. This bolstered our efforts in ensuring that SEL was a district-wide approach and aligning those efforts with the district mission and vision. Staff across the district agree that schools are optimal environments for students to develop, utilize and generalize necessary and lifelong SEL skills. The DPI SEL Competencies act as a guide to provide us with a clear framework.

As a result of this district-wide understanding and commitment, the Stoughton Area School District made large gains during the 2018-19 school year to increase consistent mental health and wellness resources, including universal evidence-based practices. All 3 elementary buildings implemented Responsive Classroom, Second Step (SS), SS Child Protection, SS Bullying Prevention and Zones of Regulation in all K-5 classrooms. The middle school delivered Second Step in all homerooms twice per week, as well as additional bully prevention lessons throughout the school year.

## **THE PLAYERS**

Major implementation decisions are determined through district wide teams that have representatives from each of the schools, with students being our first priority. When possible, we also include members from the community. District-wide teams include a variety of staff including administrators, general education teachers, learning strategists (special education teachers), school social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, deans, and educational assistants. Our district wide SEL decisions consider all students through an equitable, trauma sensitive, and culturally responsive lens. Certain groups, such as our Compassionate Schools Team and PBIS Team have been combined due to the natural relationship between social emotional learning and creating a safe and inclusive school environment.

Additionally, upon completion of the Department of Public Instruction's Day 1 of *Moving Forward with SEL*, SEL Teams from K-8 buildings were formed from existing committees with action plans of increasing student generalization of SEL skills beyond explicit instruction. These teams will also attend Day 2 of the training during the 2019-20 school year. Two schools will have representation at DPI's SEL Training of Trainers to effectively provide professional development to school staff, which will continue our conversations of the importance of SEL work by all staff. These building-level teams will also meet as a district team throughout the school year to share goals, best practices and advance our district-wide SEL implementation structure. With the support of the RTI Center, the district is also in the process of evaluating its universal strategies for SEL skill development.

## **Big Ideas from**

### **INSTRUCTION**

While each school maintains autonomy to implement supports deemed essential in meeting their individual school's needs, the following universal supports are implemented across the district for all students. Secondary and tertiary interventions are delivered for identified students:

#### *Universal*

- PBIS (K-12)
- Responsive Classroom (K-5)
- [Second Step Bullying Prevention, Child Protection](#) (K-5)
- [Zones of Regulation](#) (K-5)
- Second Step (K-8)
- [Safe School Ambassadors](#) (6-8)
- [Signs of Suicide](#) (7th grade and 9th or 10th grade Health)
- [Where Everybody Belongs](#) (6-8)
- [Link Crew](#) (9-12)

#### *Secondary Interventions*

- Student Academic and Instructional Groups, facilitated by pupil services staff, as identified by needs (K-12)
- [FaceKids Suicide/AODA Prevention Groups](#) co-facilitated by a mental health therapist from Catholic Charities and pupil services staff (K-12)
- [Cognitive Behavior Intervention for Trauma In Schools](#) (CBITS). Screening of 6th grade students with subsequent identification of students for participation in small groups

co-facilitated by a mental health therapist from Journey Mental Health and pupil services staff.

- [Bounceback Training](#) provided to seven K-5 pupil services staff in January 2019 with a fall 2019 implementation goal with support from Catholic Charities.
- [Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills for Schools](#) training for K-12 pupil services staff and special education teachers in June 2019 with a fall 2019 implementation goal.

### *Tertiary Intervention*

- Three community mental health providers (CMHP) delivering mental health therapy to identified students (K-12)
- [Building Bridges](#) (K-8)
- [Heartmath Training](#) provided to K-12 pupil services staff in May 2019 with a fall 2019 implementation goal.

### **ADULT**

For the past two years, SASD staff has maintained a committed focus on the social emotional needs of our students. During the 2018-19 school year, three professional development presentations focused on Trauma Sensitive Schools (TSS). Four staff members attended TSS Training of Trainers (ToT) at Saint As in March funded by the Title IV Grant. These staff members will create a professional development plan for the 2019-20 school year. Additionally, Professional Practice Goals focused on SEL district-wide. Each staff member identified an area in which to learn, such as TSS, Collaborative Proactive Solutions (CPS), mental health, culturally responsive practices, suicide prevention or bullying prevention.

In January 2019, all educational assistants in the district attended [Youth Mental Health First Aid](#) (YMHFA). Two YMHFA trainings were held in June 2019 to staff, parents/guardians and community members. Two elementary schools sent staff to [Compassionate Resilience Training](#). These trained individuals deliver this content during staff meetings. We are looking to have representation from each building at future Compassionate Resilience Trainings. Regular follow-up coaching has been provided for the [Nurtured Heart Approach](#) throughout the district. For the past few years, Nurtured Heart training was provided each school year and summer to staff, parents/guardians and community members. This summer the district will provide a one day training to link Collaborative Proactive Solutions with Nurtured Heart Approach to address and reinforce the lagging social/emotional skills of students with challenging behaviors.

In addition to these district-level supports, each school maintains autonomy to implement staff education and supports deemed essential to meet their individual school's needs.

### **SUSTAINABILITY**

SASD is committed to the social and emotional needs of our students; our district strategic plan includes the goal of "Engaging students in instruction designs that promote physical and emotional well-being." Our action step for the 2019-20 district improvement plan includes the converging of the PBIS and Compassionate Schools Teams in order to create action steps for the mission/vision of PBIS/Compassionate Schools which states: "Our Compassionate School Community will operate within a proactive system of support to promote a positive culture with equity, respect, and dignity so we can thrive emotionally, socially, and academically." These action steps include the evaluation of strategies/practices throughout the district, and establishment of data points to measure effectiveness of practices for

social/emotional learning and mental wellness of students. The desired outcome will be to re-establish PBIS as the framework to systematize all of the work we do for social and emotional supports for students. The district will use a variety of resources in order to sustain this work including the use of district funds, state and federal grants, and growing community partnerships.

Collaboration with community partners is essential to increase sustainability. A vigorous collaborative partnership has begun with our CMHPs, with regular meetings scheduled to take place throughout each school year to review progress, celebrate successes and problem solve difficulties. It is a priority that identified goals are reached and barriers to mental health supports eliminated for our students. All parties are committed to frequent communication and collaboration to ensure that the social emotional well being of our students is being met.

A strong community partner is the Stoughton Wellness Coalition, which is a robust partnership between the City of Stoughton, Stoughton Hospital and SASD. The Coalition provides ongoing outreach and education in the community on topics of youth substance use prevention, mental health and parent engagement. The Coalition provides district funding for the Safe School Ambassador Program (6-8) and CBITS (6th grade). The SWC, Stoughton Public Library, and SASD have initiated a partnership to provide Mental Health Forums throughout the 2019-20 school year. The first Forum was held in May 2019 (trauma, its impact, and hope and resilience) with another one planned in September 2019 (mental health stigma reduction). A Community Mental Health Summit is being planned with this partnership for July 2019. Youth-serving agencies will be identified and invited to collaborate on a school/community mental health resource mapping and gap analysis project.

### **EQUITY**

All students in grades K-8 receive consistent, evidence-based SEL instruction. The goal over the next few years is to increase SEL knowledge, skills and attitudes beyond the classroom and into all school environments. Additionally, we aspire to improve the use of data in identifying students for tier 2 and tier 3 supports.

The Stoughton Area School District has begun a system-wide journey of difficult conversations and new ways of thinking that will further the work we are already doing. We have noticed disparities in outcomes for students of color and other students from vulnerable groups. Beginning in the 2019-20 school year, the SASD staff will engage in a [book study](#) to learn about the history of oppression and systemic racism in order to increase racial identity and equitable practices for our students. In the spring of 2019, interested staff from across the district applied to be on an Equity Team. This Team will attend two restorative circle trainings during the summer of 2019 and facilitate critical staff conversations at each building during the school year. Circles will occur during the 2019-20 school year in six building based modules that include the restorative circle practice and the history of oppression/racism in the country, state, and county (3 of the 6 modules). The circle process will provide a structure for us to hold both agreement and disagreement creatively and respectfully. Our goal is to work together to increase opportunities for students in our district.

What have the outcomes been?

SEL has been made a clear priority and educators understand the connection between SEL and academic skill improvement. Community partnerships have been established with mental health providers and other community partners. This has increased the shared understanding of the

importance of SEL community-wide, broken down barriers to students receiving the services they need, as well as increased partnerships and funding resources.

How are things different for kids?

Students are receiving consistent and developmentally appropriate SEL supports. Educators have a more accurate perspective of students with trauma and believe that all kids can improve their social-emotional abilities. Integration within academic instruction will be a continuous effort.

### Conclusion

SEL will continue to grow and develop within the district. Through reflection and continual learning of the latest evidenced-based practices we will be able to maximize our students SE abilities. The district wide map of supports will become comprehensive, interventions will improve, and students will be able to achieve at their highest potential.