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Wisconsin Social and Emotional Learning Out-of-School Time Case Study: Madison- Area Out of School Time (MOST)

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Introduction/Background

HISTORY

MOST, Madison-area Out of School Time, started in 2013 as a partnership between the City of Madison, Madison Metropolitan School District, and dozens of Out of School Time (OST) Organizations. We are different from a “typical” OST organization given that we are not a direct service provider. Instead, we work in partnership with dozens of different OST organizations to ensure that all young people in Madison have access to quality OST programs. Given our different organizational approach and history, we think about SEL a little bit differently. Rather than doing or scaling SEL programs, **we think about SEL practices to incorporate into OST programs, and how we do that work system-wide with well over 100 OST organizations in Madison.** Given our scope of work, many of the SEL practices we include are focused on organizational climate. i.e. **What are the organizational conditions necessary to allow young people to develop skills like self-awareness, decision-making, and relationship building skills?** What are the organizational and structural changes we need to make in order to create environments where young people can thrive?

THE MODEL

Our strategy is not to measure individual student SEL growth, but to think programmatically and organizationally about how to engage in a continuous improvement process that includes SEL.

We have partners that offer programming focused on everything from golf, coding, music production, gardening, and everything in between. Given the range and scope of programs that we work with, **we had to answer a paramount question first: what does every young person deserve when they walk into an OST space?** Through answering that question with a collaborative group of OST organizations we identified seven building blocks and published them in an Effective Practices Guide:

<https://mostmadison.org/sites/default/files/most/documents/MOSTEffectivePractices.pdf>. These **building blocks are primarily about organizational climate rather than specific SEL skills we want to impart to student participants, but we believe that they are the groundwork for shaping the conditions for young people to demonstrate SEL growth.**

THE PLAYERS

MOST works with large, small, CLC, private, public, athletic, academic, employment, and arts organizations. We also have policy-makers, funders, researchers, city staff, and school district personnel as partners in our work. The scope of youth our partners work with range from five-year olds to recent high school graduates. This diversity of organizational missions drives our SEL approach that is more focused on programs/organizations and climate than individual students.

Big Ideas From ...

INSTRUCTION

Again, given our different approach/model, our idea of instruction might be better named as process. Through working with dozens of OST organizations to develop our Effective Practices Guide we were able to elevate and

validate, through a community process, several key SEL strategies. We are now moving onto the more important work of supporting organizations improve quality of programming through SEL and our Effective Practices Guide by offering Professional Development and thinking about the continuous improvement process.

ADULT

Few organizations in Madison have the actual capacity to invest in robust professional development that is aligned with quality OST or SEL standards, especially when you factor in the issues with staff retention and recruitment that many organizations face. That is why MOST has taken on a centralized approach to PD and has already offered training that includes SEL strategies to dozens of OST organizations. We will be offering free monthly PD open to any OST worker in Madison for the 18-19 school year, along with setting up a few communities of practice around topics such as Racial Justice. We know this is not enough and are hoping to scale to provide more robust PD and sequences of training for new youth workers that include SEL strategies and SEL climate approaches.

SUSTAINABILITY

We benefit from funding from both City of Madison and the Madison Metropolitan School District, but our sustainability is primarily driven by our stakeholder building process. All of our work is done in collaboration and with **broad stakeholder engagement**. While this work is hard, and sometime slower than we would like, by including the broad spectrum of voices at the table up-front we are able to build investment into our model. We are not just relying on our current funding structure and stakeholder investment, though; we are moving into a place of **demonstrating the value and building the infrastructure locally to advocate for the critical role that OST organizations play, particularly as it relates to SEL**. OST plays a profound role in young people's lives, and, as a more flexible space than schools, organizational climate is often better suited to focus on SEL.

EQUITY

Equity, and particularly racial justice, are core components to our thinking. We believe that every young person deserves OST environments where they feel loved, valued, able to take risks, and where they are able to nurture relationships with caring adults. **We believe thinking with an SEL framework about organizational climate allows us to self-examine our organizational practices and the impact they have on young people rather than being caught in the urgency of providing services**. This provides an important mechanism to really evaluate what our organizations do and how we may disrupt inequality.

Conclusion

WHAT HAVE THE OUTCOMES BEEN?

Because MOST works in partnership with dozens of different agencies, tracking system-wide outcomes requires a common system for all OST organizations; that is what we are working on now.

HOW ARE THINGS DIFFERENT FOR KIDS?

Thinking from an SEL approach about OST organizational climate allows us to tap into the radical potential that OST spaces have. There are not many places for young people where they can learn in more self-directed ways based on self-interest, where they can nurture meaningful relationships with adults in relatively informal environments, where they can feel loved, challenged, and seen, and where there is a space that they are excited to go to each day. That is the promise we see in an SEL framework for OST.