About the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy

• Mission: improve public education through well-informed decision-making based on deep knowledge and evidence of effective policymaking and practice.

• Through a staunch commitment to independent, non-partisan research and constructive conversations, we work to promote an education system that provides every child with the opportunity to be successful in school and in life.
Why is social-emotional learning important?

• SEL is key to succeeding in school and life: linked to higher academic achievement and higher lifetime earnings.

• Although the education field has long embraced the importance of supporting the whole child and social and emotional learning, systems and policies have not kept up.
What are key lessons from other states?

**Study approach**

- **SEL learning in states**
  - What can be learned from states with SEL-related policies?

- **Local policy environment**
  - What is the policy environment in MA for bringing about statewide change related to SEL?
  - Changes in practice and measurement?

- **Impact on practice and measurements**
  - Key considerations moving forward
Prioritize: SEL requires leadership at the district-level.

All learning is social and emotional. Effective reform strategies do not require choosing between academics, SEL, and other priorities.

- What is my district’s mission and vision? And elements of SEL are inherent in this vision?
- Do any of my schools already demonstrate a strong SEL vision? How did I foster the “spread” of this work?
- What local partners have a vested interest in supporting student SEL success?
KEY CHALLENGE

Prioritize: SEL requires leadership at the district-level.

In Gardner, Reading, and Fall River, SEL is a leadership focus. Superintendents and district leadership teams have initiated and/or prioritized this work.
Operationalize: “Ingredients” matter.

Funding, human capital, and sustainable capacity need to all be considered.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

• What funding sources exist in my district?
• Who on my team, or in my district, could serve as SEL leaders, coaches, trainers?
• What resources (professional development, curriculum resources) exist that can be used to enhance SEL competencies?
KEY CHALLENGE

Operationalize: “Ingredients” matter.

District leadership in Gardner, MA designated 2 SEL teacher leaders per school; these staff receive training from the district and provide professional development to school colleagues.
Integrate: SEL creates broad-based solutions.

Alignment with other strategies in a district increases effectiveness.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

- What initiatives are already in place that attend to SEL-related needs?
- What are my district’s biggest learning needs? And how could addressing SEL improvements meet these goals?
- How can SEL enhance our academic curriculum?
Integrate: SEL creates broad-based solutions.

In Reading, MA, a community coalition that includes the school district has led a focus on SEL issues as part of community-level focus on substance abuse.
Measure and Evaluate: Supporting a SEL focus with data.

Determine which skills matter, and develop ways to monitor and track growth in these skills.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

- What concrete steps can each member of my team take to further SEL? How will we know that they have occurred?
- How will our district team, families and students, themselves, know that students are gaining SEL competencies?
- What data do we already collect about student progress, school climate, and teacher climate?
Measure and Evaluate: Supporting SEL focus with data.

In Fall River, a district-level SEL network coordinates trainings on best practices with SEL school teams, and monthly SEL data reviews.
Rennie Center’s work on SEL

Social and Emotional Learning: Opportunities for Massachusetts, Lessons for the Nation
www.renniecenter.org/topics/SEL_policy.html

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