

BOARD BRIEF

Date: June 16, 2023

BOARD INFORMATION: X

MEETING PREPARATION: _____

FROM: Jennifer Whitson, Ed.D., Evaluation and Assessment Analyst
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Marcia Jackson, Ed.D., Chief of Student Services and Equity

THROUGH: Melanie Kay-Wyatt, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Meagan L. Alderton, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Evaluation Planning Update

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Goal 1: Systemic Alignment

Goal 3: Student Accessibility and Support

SY 2022-2023 FOCUS AREA:

SEAL Recovery

Hispanic Males

Staff Wellness and Growth

Continued SST Support Expansion

Strategic Plan Implementation

Continuous Improvement in KPI Disparities

FY 2023 BUDGET PRIORITY:

Address Chronic Absenteeism & High School
Graduation Rate Among Hispanic Male
Students

Social and Emotional Supports for Students

Expand Cultural Competency Training to ACPS
Families

SUMMARY:

On March 30, 2023, the Board approved a five-year program evaluation calendar with Social Emotional Learning (SEL) being the first program on that calendar. Department and school leaders initiated the evaluation framing phase on the project and drafted a logic model articulating the specific problem SEL programs in ACPS are designed to target. To ensure stakeholder voice was incorporated throughout the project, teachers and students provided feedback informing multiple iterations of the logic model and research design and considerations. A Request for Proposals (RFP) has been drafted and is being routed through procurement with an anticipated award date of the end of August, 2023.

BACKGROUND:

ACPS' Equity for All: 2025 strategic plan states that, "ACPS will ensure students have equitable access to and engagement with programs and supports that reduce barriers to learning." In articulating the logic model for the evaluation of SEL within ACPS, division and school leaders identified differences in supportive relationships (both students and staff) that lead to disproportionate outcomes including attendance, behaviors, and student achievement as part of the needs that SEL could help address. Further, students and staff experience stress and trauma in school and life that may require specific supports in developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to engage effectively in teaching and learning.

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The workgroup charged with creating the draft logic model to inform the RFP was made up of department and school staff members. MTSS Tier 1 programs that are proactive in delivering SEL for all students were prioritized. The primary activities outlined in the logic model include division SE(A)L lessons, the RULER curriculum, Restorative Practices, Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS), and training in classroom management strategies and SEL supports. Key assumptions of the theory of action include staff capacity and commitment to support SEL, identification and utilization of needed resources and supports and staff collaboration around anti-racist actions to redress systemic inequities including SEL competencies/outcomes.

The purpose of the evaluation is to formatively assess implementation of SEL programs within the division to drive improvement efforts. The following key research questions serve as a guide to reach the desired goals for the evaluation:

1. What are some of the more common strategies ACPS staff are using to build relationships and what does that look like and sound like?
2. What are facilitators and constraints to implementing SEL across the division?
3. To what extent do adults in the division have the knowledge, skills, and behaviors to be able to deliver and model SEL programs?
4. To what extent is there evidence of organizational alignment and integration (e.g. MTSS) to support student and adult SEL?

The division is in the process of competitively selecting an external research partner with specific expertise in SEL programs. Once selected at end of August, the project will move to the Evaluation Planning phase where the final methodology will be identified and instrumentation developed. Data collection is expected to begin in fall 2023.

RECOMMENDATION: The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the information within this memo and attachments pertaining to the evaluation of SEL.

IMPACT:

The process initiated to date has been a collaborative effort involving department and school staff as well as students to achieve actionable recommendations aligned to the specific needs of students and staff within ACPS.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. SEL Evaluation Framing Workgroup Members and Stakeholder Feedback Groups
2. Working Draft of a SEL Logic Model
3. March 30, 2023 ACPS Program Evaluation Calendar
4. March 16, 2023 Presentation of Program Evaluation Proposed Calendar

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