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# NYSASCD Fall Conference: Mental Health Literacy in Schools & Promoting Positive School Climates

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New York State Education Department

# New York State: 1<sup>st</sup> in the Nation to Require Mental Health Education in State Law!

In 2016, New York State became the 1<sup>st</sup> in the nation to require mental health education in schools by amending State Education Law as follows:

*“... recognizing the multidimensions of health and its relation to mental health” and*

*“... to enhance student understanding, attitudes and behaviors that promote health, well-being and human dignity.”*

-Chapter 390 of the Laws of 2016 with an effective date of July 1, 2018

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eFb1LtJULrc>



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# Mental Health Education Advisory Council

In September 2017, the Department established the **Mental Health Education Advisory Council** that included over 75 cross-disciplinary and cross-sector partners working collaboratively with a goal of assisting schools to effectively maximize students' knowledge and understanding of the multiple dimensions of health, including mental health wellness.

In June 2018, the Department released the *Mental Health Education Literacy in Schools: Linking to a Continuum of Well-Being - a* comprehensive guide designed to help schools develop mental health curricula aligned with the New York State Learning Standards, and to tailor instruction and programs based on locally identified needs.

In developing the guidance, NYSED worked closely with the New York State Office of Mental Health and the Mental Health Association of NYS to establish the **New York State Mental Health Education Advisory Council**

<http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/curriculum-instruction/continuumofwellbeingguide.pdf>



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# Re-Establish New York State Safe Schools Task Force

In January 2013, the NYS Board of Regents re-established the NYS Safe Schools Task Force which was charged with making recommendations to the Board to improve school safety in New York.

*Vision Statement:*

*“School environments in New York State will effectively promote and protect the well-being of ALL students and personnel each day and into the future.”*



# New York State Safe Schools Task Force

Safe Schools is a *multi-faceted* topic that takes a *multi-pronged* approach to be successful:

The NYS Safe Schools Task Force formulated  
Three Workgroups:

1. School Climate and Student Engagement
2. Data Use and Reporting
3. Building Infrastructure and Security



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# NYS Safe Schools Task Force Advanced 36 Recommendations

Two themes were evident throughout the 36 Task Force Recommendations:

*Promote and measure school climate rather than focus exclusively on measuring school violence, and*

*Focus on Social Emotional Learning to help students learn the essential skills that affect every area of our lives, including how to understand and manage emotions, and how to establish and maintain positive relationships.*

\* <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/914p12d6.pdf>

# Why Measure School Climate?

Research suggests that:

- The **quality of the school climate may be the single most predictive factor** in any school's capacity to promote student achievement;
- If we want achievement gains, we need to begin by improving the school climate.

Shindler, J., Jones, A., Williams, A.D., Taylor, C., Cardenia, H. (2016). The school climate-student achievement connection: If we want achievement gains, we need to begin by improving the climate. *Journal of School Administration Research and Development* 1(1), 9-16.

# Promoting and Measuring School Climate

## Goals:

To promote, measure, and improve school climate in schools and school districts across the State

## Five Action Steps:

1. Develop a **School Climate Mission Statement**, and adopt a **School Climate Framework** (e.g., Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Restorative Practices, Trauma-Sensitive Practices);
2. **Establish a Community Engagement Team** that is focused on school climate improvement;
3. **Administer the USDE School Climate Surveys** to students, parents, instructional staff and non-instructional staff;
4. **Analyze Survey Results** and other pertinent data (e.g. chronic absenteeism data, school violence index, suspension data) with the Community Engagement Team; and
5. **Create and Implement an Action Plan** with the Community Engagement Team to address areas of need.

## NYSED School Climate Pilot:

In 2016-17, six districts participated in the testing pilot

In 2017-18, the Pilot was expanded to 30 participating districts

In 2018-19, NYSED will conduct a full pilot with up to 100 districts participating

In 2019-20, NYSED expects full implementation statewide



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# Social Emotional Learning

Social emotional learning (SEL) “is the process through which children, youth, and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions”

*Dusenbury, L., Calin, S., Domitrovic, C., Weissberg, R.P. (2015). What Does Evidence-Based Instruction in Social and Emotional Learning Actually Look Like in Practice? A Brief on Findings from CASEL’s Program Reviews, A Publication of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.*

# Social Emotional Learning in the NYS ESSA Plan

New York State’s recently approved Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan specifically states the following goal :

“ensure that all students have access to support for their social-emotional well-being.”

Fostering the development of Social Emotional Learning competencies for all students and adults in our schools and communities supports the following ESSA Plan priorities to:

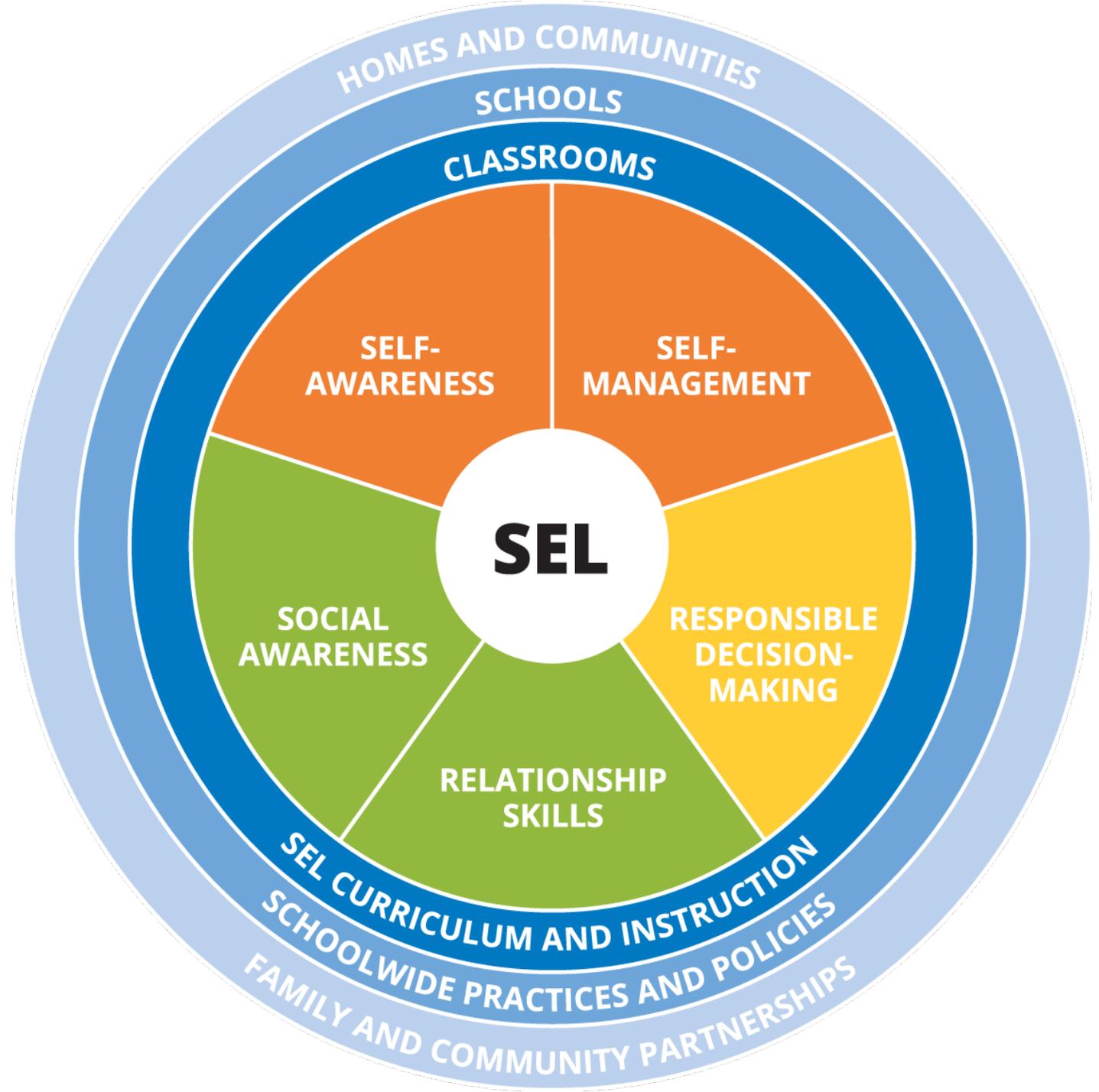
- improve academic achievement and graduation rates;
- improve school climate; and
- increase educational equity.



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# Social and Emotional Five Core Competencies



# NYS Social Emotional Learning: Essential for Learning, Essential for Life

In August 2018, the Department released resources that outline benchmarks and frameworks for educators to implement Social Emotional Learning practices in their schools and classrooms: [\*New York State Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks\*](#) and [\*Social Emotional Learning: Essential for Learning, Essential for Life\*](#), a framework explaining SEL concepts, and the need for and benefit of SEL in NY.

In addition, NYSED is continuing to develop additional resources to support SEL implementation, including guidance for systemic whole school implementation and district-developed resources aligning SEL competencies, academic standards, classroom activities and general teaching practices. These resources are expected to be available later this year.

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/documents/SELEssentialforLearningandLife.pdf>

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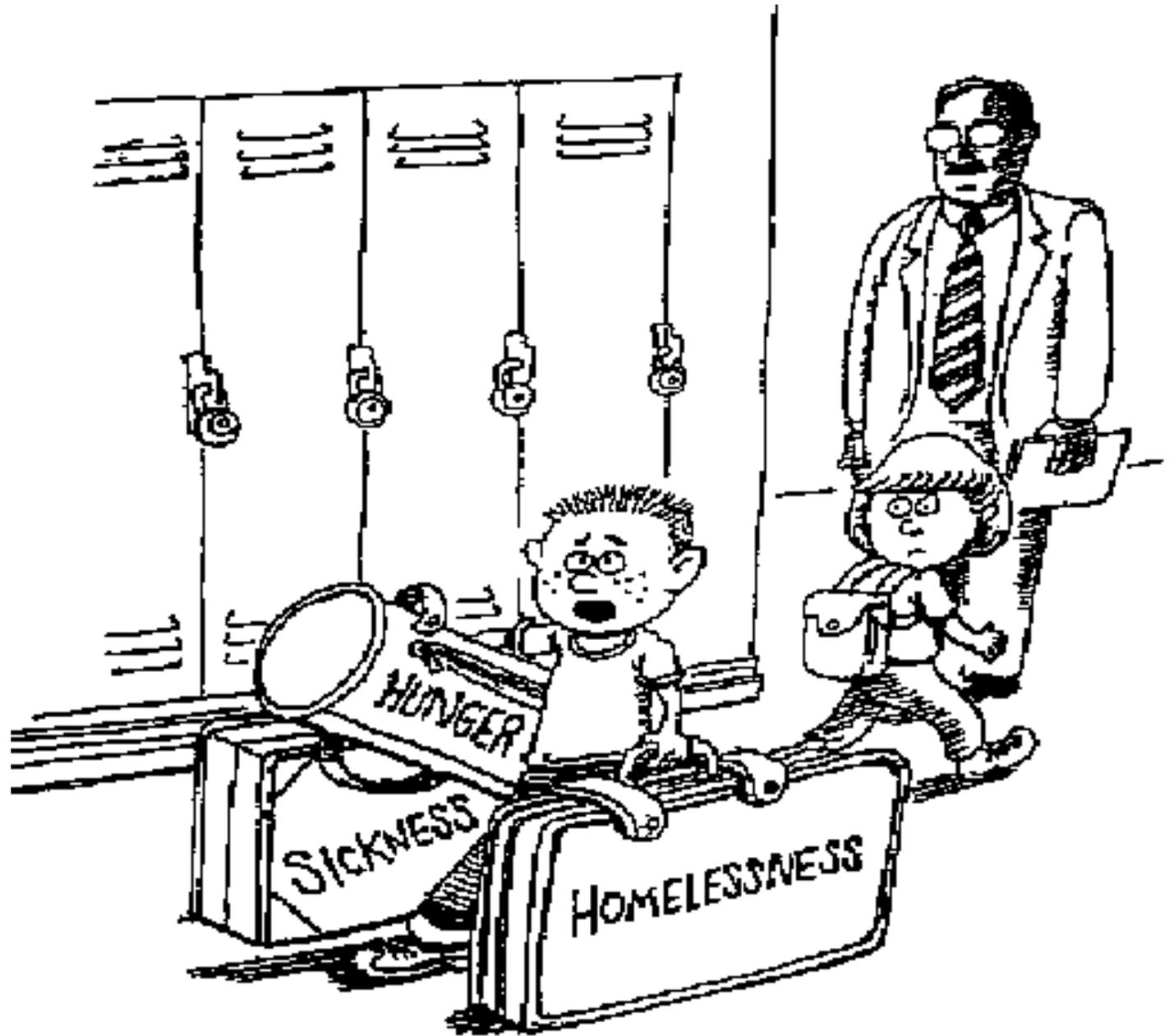
# Strategies to Develop School Climate Frameworks



# Safe and Supportive Schools Technical Assistance Center

- 2018-19 enacted State budget appropriated \$2 million to provide on-site technical assistance to schools receiving Supportive Schools Grants on Social Emotional Learning; Trauma-Informed Practices; Mental Health Education & Supports; Restorative Practices; Parent, Family and Community Engagement; Student Leadership; among others;
- Distribute up to \$100,000 grants to middle schools and high schools identified in need of technical assistance and resources to build healthy, supportive and safe learning environments.

“ Could  
someone  
help me with  
these?  
I’m late for  
math class.”





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