Core Function → **Personalized Learning: Social/ Emotional Competency**

Effective Practice → **Providing instruction, modeling, classroom norms, and caring attention that promotes students' self-respect, management of emotions, concern for others, and responsibility**

Indicator: The school's key documents explain the value of social/ emotional competency and how it is enhanced through specific roles and relationships. (F6)

Explanation: The evidence suggests that the Social Emotional Competency promotes self- and social awareness and management, as well as how to make responsible decisions. These skills have been shown to improve academic, social, and behavioral outcomes, especially when both home and school provide positive environments in which these skills can grow. Schools can help families better understand social-emotional skills for their own betterment and to help them work with their children on positive relationships, behaviors, and self-concept. Embedding the Social/ Emotional Competency into the school's key documents and then sharing those in meaningful ways can help families and the school community understand the priorities and values of the school.

Questions: Which of the school's documents currently focus on priorities and values? Which documents could be updated to include information about the Social/Emotional Competency? In what ways are teachers, other staff, and the School Community Council supplementing these documents with conversations about expectations and student progress to families?

What is the Social/Emotional Competency?

The Social/Emotional Competency fosters a level of concern and respect for oneself and others strengthening skills of self-management and productive decision-making (Carreker & Boulware-Gooden, 2015; Educator Competencies, 2015; Redding, 2016). Specifically, social-emotional learning (SEL) helps students use their "sense of self-worth, regard for others, and emotional understanding and management to set positive goals and make responsible decisions" (Carreker & Boulware-Gooden, 2015, p. 2). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2012) identifies five primary skills in the Social/Emotional domain:

- Self-awareness: Being able to identify and understand one's own emotions, thoughts, behaviors, and abilities;

- Self-management: Being able to regulate these emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in the pursuit of positive and healthy goals;

- Social awareness: Being able to understand and relate to others, identify social supports and resources, and understand social norms for how to act;

- Relationship skills: Being able to communicate and work well with others and develop positive and meaningful relationships; and

- Responsible decision-making: Being able to make productive decisions about how to behave and interact with others, based on an understanding of norms, consequences, and others' needs.

Weissberg and Cascarino (2013) write that, "SEL programming is based on the understanding that the best learning emerges in the context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging, and meaningful" (p. 10). Yet many of these skills need to be explicitly taught to children and adolescents, especially as they pertain to the learning process. School staff and volunteers should not only teach these concepts but should also model and provide opportunities for their application throughout the school day, in the context of a safe environment for socializing and learning (Wiessberg & Cascarino, 2013; Carreker & Boulware-Gooden, 2015).

The five SEL skills are developed within this positive learning environment, but they are put to use both at school and in the community at large. Research has shown that students who have had training in the Social/Emotional Competency are better students, better citizens, and better employees later in life, with reduced rates of negative or risky behaviors and disciplinary issues (CASEL, 2012; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013; CASEL, 2015). The Social/Emotional Competency is therefore critical for students of all ages to learn and master; students need a solid foundation in self-concept and empathy for others at an early age, but the ability to navigate "increased independence, peer pressure, and exposure to social media" in adolescent and teenage years is critical for their academic and personal success (CASEL, 2015, p. 6).

Why is it important to focus on Social/Emotional Competency in key documents and conversations?

Much of a student's self-concept and social skills have their roots outside of the school building. Involving families in Social-Emotional Competency work allows for better coordination between what happens at school and at home and builds positive relationships between families and educators (CASEL, 2012; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013; CASEL, 2015). Schools can take a number of simple actions to help parents better understand and be able to foster SEL at home.

One way to ensure alignment with the school about the Social/Emotional Competency is to embed it into key communications and documents from the school. These documents include "the school's mission statement, compact with parents, staff employment manuals, and student handbook" (Redding, 2014, p. 24). Information

about school programs, the school improvement plan, curriculum guides, and the list of policies and procedures are also important places to highlight the Social/Emotional Competency (Redding, 2006; Redding, 2016). In these documents, the school can emphasize its focus on the Social/Emotional Competency, explaining what it is and how it is addressed throughout the school day and year.

When shared publicly, through the school website or at events such as Back to School Night and parent-teacher conferences, families can be better informed about the priorities and values of the school and how they can reinforce them at home (Redding, 2014). Schools must also provide guidance and strategies for parents to use in helping their children in these areas of growth at home (Kraft & Dougherty, 2013). Redding (2006) emphasizes that these constructive conversations around the Social/Emotional Competency help to "build a sense of community around the purposes of the school," making it clear what each person's role is in that child's educational experience (p. 162).

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