



News Release

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MDE Establishes Network to Address Children's Social and Emotional Learning and Mental Health Needs

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LANSING – To help address the social and emotional learning (SEL) and mental health needs of children across Michigan, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is establishing an SEL network of state stakeholders with input from national experts.

"This developing network will help broaden, deepen, and make more cohesive our efforts in SEL and children's mental health across the state," said State Superintendent Dr. Michael Rice.

"This work is essential and consistent with the state's strategic education plan in promoting the health, safety, and wellness for all of our children, both physically and socio-emotionally," said State Board of Education President Dr. Casandra Ulbrich.

SEL comprises five competencies important to all students: self-awareness, awareness of others, self-management, relationship to others, and decision making. One of the network's efforts will focus on increasing the numbers of staff members with rudimentary professional development in social and emotional learning, as well as the deepening of the knowledge base of those who already have some training in the area.

The SEL network will also weave its efforts into addressing children's mental health. Even before the pandemic, 20 percent of children were experiencing mental health challenges, according to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This summer, Michigan was named one of nine states to work with the national Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the major SEL association in the country, on strengthening SEL and school-based multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS) within their states.

CASEL's collaborating states initiative and CCSSO welcomed Michigan into their *Effective Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS): SEL and Whole Child Development* program. This program, funded by the Chad Zuckerberg Initiative, connects states with national experts to provide technical assistance, coaching, document review, and early access to resources and examples from CASEL and CCSSO.

Additionally, Michigan participates in the American Association of Superintendents and Administrators (AASA) SEL Cohort, of which Superintendent Rice serves as a co-chair. AASA is the national superintendents' association and has worked closely with CASEL to expand knowledge of and competence in SEL nationally.

A \$500,000 Michigan Health Endowment Fund (MHEF) grant will help MDE build out a community of practice over the next two years to support district-wide adoption of social and emotional learning embedded into classroom instruction and out-of-school time. The department will work with 20 districts—by competitive application—that have an interest in deep implementation of SEL within their school communities.

"We are building on the important efforts from the last several years and making them into a more cohesive initiative that will affect a broader range of interested schools, school districts, children, and staff," Dr. Rice said.

In partnership with organizations, associations, and agencies across the state, MDE will lead this diverse network. The growing network includes a wide range of professionals, including school health coordinators, school counselors, school psychologists, and educators and administrators with experience in SEL and SEL's connection with children's mental health.

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