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NYS Assembly Hearing on School Health,
Mental Health, and Physical Education

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Tuesday, October 23 2018

Mental Health as part of Health Education

In 2016, legislation recognizing the multidimensional nature of health was enacted requiring schools to incorporate mental health into health education programs in order *“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



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Mental Health Education Guidance

In June, the Department released the *Mental Health Education Literacy in Schools: Linking to a Continuum of Well-Being*. This comprehensive guide is designed to help schools develop mental health curricula aligned with the State Learning Standards, and to tailor instruction and programs based on locally identified needs as required by the changes to Education Law §804.

- In developing the guidance, the Department worked closely with the New York State Office of Mental Health and the Mental Health Association of New York State and together, established the New York State Mental Health Education Advisory Council.
- The Council 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.



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Safe and Supportive Schools Grant Program

Every child deserves to attend a safe, high-quality school where all students, teachers, and staff are treated with dignity and respect. To improve school climate, schools need effective strategies for building healthy, supportive, and safe learning environments for students and educators through strengths-based practices that work to encourage strong social emotional learning skills and mental health support for all students.

In the Enacted 2018-19 Budget, the State- lead by Chair Nolan, Speaker Heastie, and the Assembly provided critical resources for the Board and Department Budget priority for schools to improve school culture, climate, and safety through the Safe and Supportive Schools Grant Program.



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Safe and Supportive Schools Grant Program

\$1.6 million in State Funds will be distributed to schools identified as in need of technical assistance and resources to build healthy, supportive and safe learning environments.

- Middle schools and high schools that meet the criteria below will be eligible for up to \$100,000 grants.
 - Must exceed the statewide average in (1) VADIR/DASA incident rate, (2) Suspension Rate, (3) Chronic Absenteeism Rate, (4) Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Students, and (5) Percentage of Students of Color.
- To participate, district/school officials must agree to
 - Establish a Community Engagement Team that includes parents, students, administrators and staff, school board members, pupil personnel services, community members among others
 - Administer the USDE School Climate Surveys to parents, students, and school personnel
 - Work with the new Technical Assistance Center to analyze school climate survey results and other pertinent data such as discipline referrals, in and out of school suspensions and chronic absenteeism data.
 - With Technical Assistance Center Staff, develop a School Climate Framework which includes implementing Social Emotional Learning, Mental Health Supports, Restorative Practices, Trauma-Informed Practices, Peer Mentoring programs, Parent Engagement Activities, among others.



Safe and Supportive Schools Grant Program: Technical Assistance Center

\$300,000 in State Funds will be used to fund a Technical Assistance Center that will:

- Provide on-site technical assistance to schools receiving Supportive Schools Grants related to:
 - Develop and implement strategies such as Social Emotional Learning, Trauma-Informed Practices, Mental Health Supports, Restorative Practices, Parent Engagement, Student Leadership, among others;
 - Measure school climate through the administration of school climate surveys and analyzing relevant data to improve school climate and student outcomes; and
 - Develop and implement action plans to address any needs identified through the data analysis process;
- Develop video and web-based training materials for schools;
- Design and deliver a Statewide School Climate Summit for grantees, districts and schools, to occur in Summer 2019 that consists of educators, parents, students, community members and key stakeholders to discuss best practices in the areas of promoting positive school climates, improving school safety, and preventing incidents of bullying, discrimination and harassment in schools.

\$100,000 in State funds for NYSED to hire a Project Coordinator to oversee this Grant Program



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Delivery Models For A Positive School Climate Framework



Examples:

- Mental Health Education in Schools
- Community Schools and School-Based Mental Health and Health Centers
- Social Emotional Learning
- Trauma-Sensitive Schools
- Restorative Practices
- Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Community Schools Model

- Located right inside the school, these community hubs can offer an array of services—academic, health, mental health, nutrition, counseling, and legal, all of which, at the end of the day, help student learning.
- Community schools represent a major shift in how we think about running our schools, though. They require systemic change in operational philosophy. That kind of change can be difficult.
- They require us to relinquish control and depend on one another. They require us to develop strong community partnerships that give community-based organizations, students, parents, families, and businesses a voice in decision making and planning.
- The Enacted Budget committed \$200 million this year for our 233 highest need school districts to encourage them to transform their school sites into community schools.



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Community Schools in New York- Technical Assistance Centers



- The 2017-18 Enacted Budget includes \$1.2 million for three regional Technical Assistance Centers (TACs) to support community schools development and success.
- The responsibilities of the TACs include statewide dissemination of information on effective and promising practices in the establishment and ongoing management of Community School strategies through professional development and technical assistance activities designed to:
 - Familiarize school personnel across New York State with Community School strategies;
 - Increase the knowledge and skills of school personnel and community partners to aid in the implementation, management, and sustainability of Community Schools;
 - Promote the establishment and development of Community Schools that incorporate the characteristics of Community Schools strategies listed above: a rigorous academic program with strong supports, a full range of school-based and school-linked programs and services, and partnerships that demonstrate collaboration with the local community;
 - Provide school districts with the tools necessary to design and implement needs/resource assessments that will provide the data necessary to effectively target Community School resources;
 - Increase statewide capacity to support effective Community School strategies; and
 - Identify and evaluate the school districts' needs within a region in order to provide tailored technical assistance and professional development.
- TAC Contracts are currently being finalized by the Department.

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.

- 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.

If we want achievement gains, we need to begin by improving the school climate.



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School Climate Surveys

Goals

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

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, and school personnel;
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



Social Emotional Learning



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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 Every Student Succeeds Act Plan

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

- “[e]nsure 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.



Social Emotional Learning Guidance



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In August 2018, the Department released resources that outline benchmarks and frameworks for educators to implement Social Emotional Learning (SEL) practices in their schools and classrooms: [New York State Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks](#) for voluntary implementation 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.

- NYSED staff has conducted numerous trainings on the new guidance at conferences over the summer and is planning additional trainings in New York City, the Capital Region and Rochester early next year.
- 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.

NYS Health and Physical Education Learning Standards in the NYS ESSA Plan

While Physical Education and Health are currently required subjects for all students in grades K-12, the current standards and regulations are outdated. The Department, in the NYS ESSA plan, committed to revising current Physical Education and Health Education Learning Standards.

In addition, the Department will look to build district- and school-level capacity in these areas through the following:

- Guidance about the importance of developing a strong health literacy foundation in school and adopting a Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model and coordination with other providers within the community to develop sustainable infrastructures for health and wellness initiatives.
- Promoting the use of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) School Health Index (SHI); a free, online self-assessment and planning tool that schools can use to evaluate and improve their health and safety policies and practices.
- Encouraging schools to assess and evaluate current policies and practices in place in the areas of Health Services, Nutrition Services, Counseling, Psychological and Social Services, Healthy School Environment, Health Promotion for Staff, Health Education Family – Community Involvement, and Physical Education.



NYS Physical Education Learning Standards Development

The Department is currently collaborating with physical education professionals and other stakeholder groups from across the state to develop new grade by grade P-12 NYS Physical Education Learning Standards.

- These new Standards will form the framework of teaching and learning related to physical literacy for our P-12 students.
- They will include strategies and tactics related to
 - movement and performance,
 - knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness,
 - health and wellness,
 - skills related to accessing available resources,
 - local and global opportunities to achieve and maintain physical, social and emotional wellness.



NYS Physical Education Learning Standards Development

Similar to our Next Generation Learning Standards in ELA and Math development process, the Department will ensure that:

- The process is a deliberate, inclusive and transparent approach to Learning Standards development;
- The review and revision involves educators, parents, and experts in the field; and
- That the standards are rigorous and will prepare children for successful lives in the 21st century.



NYS Physical Education Learning Standards – Next Steps

Once the Physical Education Learning Standards are updated, the work of the Department will continue, including to:

- Update regulatory guidance as appropriate;
- Develop curricular resources for schools regarding the implementation of the NYS Physical Education standards for all students;
- In addition, Physical Education teachers across the state will need professional development to align their curriculum and instructional practices to the new standards; and
- Conduct a similar process for updating the NYS Health Education Standards and ensure that this information is medically accurate. The first step to being able to undertake this important work would be for the Department to be provided with the resources to hire an Associate in Health Education.



Combating the Opioid Epidemic



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The Department has worked collaboratively with the NYS Department of Health and the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services to provide schools and communities with educational resources to combat heroin and prescription drug abuse including:

- The Combat Heroin and Prescription Drug Abuse Kitchen Table Tool Kit which includes information on engaging in conversations regarding heroin and opioids with young people and in community forums;
- Informational videos on navigating substance use disorder services;
- Prevention tips for parents; and
- *Health Education Standards Modernization Supplemental Guidance Document: An Instructional Resource Packet for Heroin and Opioids* developed to assist school districts including heroin and opioid content within the alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs in their health education programs.

Combating the Opioid Epidemic

- The Department supports the NYS Department of Health's Opioid Overdose Prevention Program in which schools and libraries that voluntarily participate, receive free naloxone that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.
- The naloxone can be administered in emergencies to a students or staff suspected of having an opioid overdose.
- Guidance for schools in both becoming a registered Opioid Overdose Prevention Program and implementing a successful program have been jointly developed by the NYS Department of Health, the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, the New York State Center for School Health and the Department.





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Thank You.

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