

MASC/MASS 2016

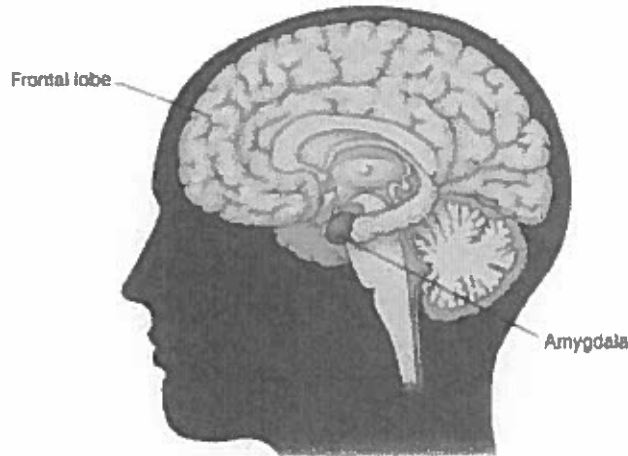
Joint Conference

November 4, 2016

**Families in Crisis: Addressing Social and Emotional Needs
of Students and Families.**

Special Thanks to the Housing Families Organization for the support and work they do in school
districts.

Effects of Trauma



Pre-frontal cortex = Thinking brain

Amygdala = Doing brain

*When the thinking brain senses a threat, it hands the reigns over to the doing brain so it can **Fight, Flee or Freeze**.

*****Once the trauma response is activated, the brain can neither absorb, nor recall information.**

*When a child's energy is on survival, neural paths do have the chance to develop normally.

*Areas impacted include, but are not limited to: cognitive reasoning, executive function, self-soothing, and emotional attachment.

*Trauma that is repeated, and/or experienced during developmental years intensifies these effects.

Fight, Flight, Freeze can look like a variety of things...

Fight

- Argumentative
 - Noncompliant
- Oppositional
 - Impulsive
- Aggressive
 - Defensiveness
- Self harm
- Controlling

Flight

- Distractible, spacing out
 - Gives up quickly
- Leaves the task, room, conversations
- Avoidant

Freeze

- Problems with initiation
 - Problems with transitions and endings
- Shut down
 - Passivity

*FFF response could be called manipulative, resistant, lazy, entitled, disrespectful

*From trauma informed perspective: overwhelmed, triggered, constantly looking for danger, mistrustful getting needs met by strategies that previously worked.

*Think of the children in you work with, now try looking at them through your "trauma lenses". How might their behavior seem different?

Signs of Trauma

Physical:

Tiredness
headaches, stomach aches
Racing heart
Muscle tension
Difficulty sleeping, nightmares

Emotional:

Irritability
Anxiety, fear, panic
Depression
Confusion, helplessness
Hyper vigilance (scanning for danger)
Low self esteem
Big emotions, easily triggered,
Shut down/ disassociated
Embarrassment
Intrusive images
Unable to regulate

Behavioral:

Act out, aggressive
Decreased coping skills
Repetitive play of trauma
Regression or
Under or over controlled behaviors
Withdrawal, avoidance
Over-responsible/ parentified

Academic:

Difficulty concentrating, disorganized
Difficulty remembering
Poor problem solving and goal setting
Trouble with abstract reasoning
Lack of judgment in decision making
Impaired cognition
Expressive/receptive language delay

Relational:

Distrust
Difficulty connecting
Withdrawal

Becoming Trauma Informed

*Our brains keep a rolodex of past traumatic experiences stored away to react even more quickly.

Sights, sound, smell, taste, and other feelings associated with past traumatic events are called "triggers".

*Takes away control, leaves one feeling powerless, fearful, or overwhelmed

*****triggers may or may not be known*****

*Look for triggers:

- within the physical space
- within your relationships with children
- within yourself

***A trauma informed program seeks to reduce triggers and celebrate strengths.**

Strategies

Space:

Recognize triggers

Visual aids

Information presented in multiple ways: verbal, written, pictures

Music

Softer lights

Organized space

Safe space — cozy corner

Outlet for talent

Let children know what to expect and structure of their time

Relationships:

Take care with your language—tone and words

Talk to the child on their level

Validate, Validate, Validate!

Listen empathetically

Specific praise

Involve kids in decisions

Let kids teach

Healthy boundaries

Being seen and heard

Positive belief in self

Build relationships with empowerment, choices, and control

Self:

Recognize triggers

Get curious about why a child is doing what they are doing

Focus on strengths

Stay calm and non judgmental

**Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents
Position Paper
Behavioral Health and Social-Emotional Intelligence**

Executive Summary

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to identify the current conditions and challenges associated with meeting students' social emotional learning needs and to outline the context in which schools are endeavoring to address these needs and to meet the challenges associated with this work. This paper will also identify the key partnerships and recommended actions.

We hope that the content of this paper will inform the thinking of our members and provide them with research based information to use in addressing social emotional learning in their respective districts. The paper is extensive and members should feel free to use those portions of the document that best meet the context of their district.

Framing the Problem

The nature of this problem has changed. Children in schools today are dealing with an increase in everyday stressors such as peer relationships, academic pressure, and social media resulting in feelings of anxiety, depression, and emotional stress and in some cases a motivation to develop and execute a suicide plan. Evidence also suggests a higher incidence of children exposed to trauma (e.g. involvement with DCF or court system, family substance use disorders, unemployment, etc.).

This changing problem is further exacerbated by the acute lack of psychiatric hospitals and crisis centers. The lack of resources in this time of critical need has extended the waiting time for students in need of psychiatric intervention. These students remain in school and the school often becomes the "default" for the mental health system. Recent changes in the student discipline regulations have often required schools to maintain students who do not possess the social emotional skills to be successful or even to negotiate the stimulation of the traditional school environment.

Supporting a Readiness to Learn in Every Student- School Partnerships and Recommended Actions

School districts need many partners to join us in this work. Schools cannot go it alone. We have endeavored to identify the respective groups, the partnerships that schools can forge with these partners and some proposed specific action plans.

Social Service Agencies

- Develop and provide accessible direct services to students with direct access to social service agencies within the school setting to increase the coordination of these services and the communication among the service providers.

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

- Provide districts with technical assistance and funding around the development of curriculum, instruction and assessment of social emotional learning in their districts.

Higher Education

- Establish a working group comprised of DESE and leaders of higher education institutions and public schools to develop a plan for the vertical articulation of a social emotional learning curriculum/program of study for pre-k through 16.
- Include a social emotional learning competency within the educator licensure requirements.

Legislative

- Enact legislation that creates inter-agencies teams to support the coordination of social services both in the schools and throughout the communities.
- Promote legislative action on the Safe and Supportive Schools Commission recommendations.

Recommended Actions for School Districts

- Build social emotional learning into the core values of the district, the action plans for district improvement and make it a core strand in the district professional development plan.
- Integrate social emotional learning within the educator evaluation system through the goal setting process and the teacher feedback following classroom observations.
- Identify both formative and summative assessment tools to monitor the health of the school climate and the success of the social emotional learning program.
- Survey districts to identify highly effective programs, curricula, partnerships, training and professional development. The results of this survey could form the foundation of a bank of resources and eliminate the practice of districts working in isolation.

Conclusion

School districts across the State are responding to the need for social-emotional learning. Our efforts to date have met with mixed results and this concern continues to grow. We need a more focused approach to this work. We need to strike a balance between the quest for high academic standards with the importance of maintaining a supportive and positive school culture. We have a duty to develop students who are socially competent and emotionally grounded. We also need to be attentive to supporting the social-emotional need of the adults so that they can create the conditions necessary to achieve this objective.