

## **Statement of How We Support Michigan Children’s Health, Safety, and Wellness**

We believe that five social emotional learning competencies serve as an effective bridge between academic and mental health supports in schools: self-awareness, awareness of others, self-management, relations to others, and responsible decision-making. These skills reduce the risk of mental illness, strengthen coping strategies, increase help-seeking behaviors, and complement the mental health education needed for effective adult and child connections. Early childhood educators, teachers and school staff use these skills to offer caring responses to times when children are sometimes tempted to react with a traumatic response, as in fight, flight, or freeze. These skills also help to reduce the stigma and isolation surrounding mental illness. When babies, children and youth practice these competencies, they are more likely to be ready to learn, complete their courses, and demonstrate academic proficiency.\* As described in the Model School Code of Conduct districts are encouraged to integrate social and emotional learning and other evidence-based pro-social development practices into their culture, supporting and sustaining them as vital elements of the school operations. The Social Emotional Learning/Children's Mental Health Network is building the state's capacity to address social, emotional, and behavioral health in early childhood settings and schools. Our efforts align with the evidence that when learners experience safe and inclusive environments, they can focus on their learning. Youth are more likely to grow academically, to be career-ready, and to succeed in school and after graduation. (1,2,3,4)

We believe that parents, guardians, and families are their children's first teachers. Our network sees that relationship as a critical condition for learning. We know that children learn best when families, early childhood educators, teachers, and staff work together to encourage and support them. Strong home/school relationships are important for student success. Research indicates that home/school partnership increases positive outcomes for children. (5)

We believe that all children deserve learning environments that are safe and welcoming and that produce a sense of belonging. Goal 3 of Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan is to improve the health, safety, and wellness of children. We promote student wellness and belonging for all children, no exceptions.

We believe educators want to be responsive to the needs of the children they serve. We know teachers, staff, and school leaders continue to learn how to best reach students and help them feel accepted, safe, and supported. The state, regional, and local education agencies all support training that engages students and their families. We commit to ensuring access to high quality professional **learning** that encourages partnerships between home, school, and community.

Based on these stated beliefs, we commit to helping early childhood settings and schools incorporate social emotional learning and school-based mental health services. We understand that funds dedicated to a comprehensive school-based mental health system are both a responsibility and an opportunity to enhance the

essential focus on children's social, emotional, and behavioral health. We commit to working with families and honoring the diversity of Michigan children, students, schools, districts, and communities.

We commit to building school communities that are safe and inclusive for all children.

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\*Note regarding age range for Michigan's children and learners: MDE's SEL competencies span birth to youth receiving post-secondary learning. Post-secondary is meant to include youth with IEPs, including those young adults who receive services to age 26.

References:

1. Aspen Institute School Climate Literature Summary March 2021.
2. SEL outcomes- SEL and Metal Analysis Durlak 2011.
3. SEL outcomes-Update on SEL and Meta-Analysis Durlak 2018.
4. Improving College and Career Readiness by Incorporating Social and Emotional Learning by Allison Dymnicki, Ph.D., Megan Sambolt, and Yael Kidron, Ph.D. March 2013
5. Research from IES that demonstrates positive link between family engagement and student outcomes,  
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northwest/askarel/family-engagement.asp>