



## SEL District Philosophy 23-24

The Rumson School District seeks to inspire students to achieve their greatest potential. We believe that all students are capable of success. In order for students to succeed, they must be able to access academic instruction with minimized barriers. Social-emotional barriers to student learning may fall under the developing capacity of children to form close relationships, manage and express their emotions, and navigate their social environments. In schools, we prioritize three critical and inter-related components of student mental health: social (how we relate to others), emotional (how we feel), and behavioral (how we act).

The District incorporates Social Emotional Learning (SEL) at a systems level to build a foundation to support academic and lifelong achievement for students. This district implementation supports positive, equitable school environments in which all students learn the skills needed to succeed. Relationships between staff and students as well as between individual students will be central to all strategies employed with the understanding that student choice and voice are necessary for successful implementation of the District SEL Program.

The Rumson School District's SEL Team provides an equitable data-driven comprehensive social emotional program that is accessible to all students. Our program is guided by a [Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(MTSS\) model](#) that is inclusive of: in-class curriculum, school-wide activities, small-groups, universal practices (e.g., responsive classroom, Metacognition, Zones of Regulation) and individual/group counseling. Through collaboration and consultation with parents/guardians, staff, stakeholders, and community members we are able to ensure a safe and supportive environment that fosters academic, social/emotional success. Our mission is to advocate for and inspire ALL students to develop their full individual potential to become life-long learners in our diverse and changing world by mastering the Rumson mindset and behavior standards.

- Tier 1 SEL strategies are designed to be implemented for all students
  - Through district initiatives across grade levels, students are instructed and support with goal of becoming “metacognitive” thinkers (i.e., to make use of a problem solving model including the following steps: 1 - Stop, 2 - Gather Information, 3 - Brainstorm, 4 - Evaluate, 5 - Plan & act, 6 - Reflect). This decision-making model can then be applied by students to everything from academics to interpersonal relationships.
  - The district has adopted a curriculum/framework in teaching students to identify and make use of strategies for emotional and sensory self-regulation. The “Zones of Regulation” provide an easy way to think and talk about how we feel on the inside and sorts emotions zones, all of which are expected in life. Supplemental resources include K-5 Regulation Stations/Sensory Pathways, and SEL/Music Mind Aligned
  - Additionally, in grades K-5, our district makes use of various curricula for ongoing student instruction in character education as well as mindfulness, including resources such as NJSB Essential Lessons, CASEL, Mind Up, SuperFlex/Social Thinking,

Responsive Classroom, Centervention, Common Sense Media, Mindful Schools, PeaceWorks, Happy Teachers Change the World, Breath for Change, and MBSR Curriculum.

- Health curricula for grades K-8 include developmentally appropriate exposure to resources including Common Sense Media, Lifelines Suicide Prevention, Great Body Shop, LEAD, Advocates for Youth and Conversation
  - A district K-8 Student Code of Conduct has been developed with established school community behavioral expectations and natural/restorative consequences. Peer leaders are trained to help 4th graders transition to middle school in a positive way. They do this through peer modeling and student-led instruction, using responsive classroom lessons. These lessons focus on the culture and climate of Forrestdale, including the schoolwide expectations of being respectful, responsible, and ready school community members.
  - District measures and practices include focus on early childhood identification so students may receive most appropriate support(s) both proactively and to prevent greater gaps in skill development.
- Tier 2 strategies are designed to be implemented with targeted groups of students identified with minimal social emotional challenges that interfere with academic participation and achievement
    - Through collaborative efforts between case managers, related service providers, special and general education teacher(s), administrators and support staff, all adults in the building gain an understanding of each child's unique profile strengths, weaknesses, and interests. Staff members are frequently identified as "trusted adults" to meet with students regularly as an alternative or supplement to more formalized counseling interventions. This may occur as a "safe landing" in the morning, opportunity for lunchtime socialization and/or art activities, as well as end of day checkpoint to ensure students are prepared for transition to after school activities.
    - Study habits, self-regulation and other targeted skills falling under "executive functioning" supports and coaching are facilitated individually and in group formats by school-based counselors.
    - Teachers, students and parents may consult with related services providers including speech-language, occupational and physical therapists, as well as board certified behavior analyst (BCBA) and school social workers, including observations and interventions to be facilitated in and/or outside of the classroom setting.
    - Students identified as "Gifted & Talented" will receive differentiated instruction as well as various supplementary activities to best support individualized development.
    - Screening/diagnostic and progress monitoring tools (e.g., teacher and/or self reports - Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BESS), Learning Disability Evaluation Scale (LDES), Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS), Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC3), Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF-2; data collection associated with district benchmark assessments via subject-specific interventionists and/or teachers), are used in order to inform supports and interventions (e.g., push-in and/or pull-out supplemental instruction, sessions specific to support of transitions, individualized goal setting and student-staff monitoring, school-based SEL counseling, as well as activities falling under complementary areas such as art, music, speech, occupational/physical therapies and behavior analysis), as well as in determining when more comprehensive diagnostics may be indicated. These may include additional teacher and/or student self-report measures, observational tools, pre- and post-assessments for group therapies
    - When students receive private and community-based therapies or supports, collaboration is encouraged between school-based and outside providers to ensure common language, approach and greatest likelihood of success

- Tier 3 strategies are implemented with students identified as having social emotional challenges requiring significant interventions to ensure appropriate participation in school and academic achievement.
  - Within the context of a “Response to Intervention” (RTI) model, staff members make use of progress monitoring tools and techniques in order to ensure adequate student growth. Should an individual or group not be meeting with expected success over time, more intensive and comprehensive assessment may be indicated. In such cases, SEL team discussion may include additional diagnostic tools, inclusion of additional staff members for intervention, and may ultimately include referral for Child Study Team consideration, assessment and possible development of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
  - Additional diagnostics (e.g., use of more intensive and detail oriented tools/techniques such as portfolio assessment, standardized cognitive, social-emotional and/or achievement batteries, data collection and behavioral observations within or across settings) are used in order to provide increasingly individualized and intensive supports. This may include increased number and/or length of intervention sessions, increasingly detailed progress monitoring and frequency of data collection specific to identified student goals/objectives, as well as highly coordinated efforts across various staff members, administration, parents and outside providers.
  - Screening tools and associated protocols have been developed so that SEL team members are prepared to respond quickly and effectively to address potentials for student harm to self and/or others. Practices include interviewing paired with medical assessment, connections to various agencies providing levels of further assessment and care, and partnerships with families in navigating the process. Additional protocols have been developed to include a trauma informed, strengths based approach focusing on the holistic needs of students, as well as to celebrate their strengths.
  - Tier 3 Support Clinician has enhanced our visibility with community agencies, making direct connections that benefit students and families in the time of crisis. Various resources have been created with direct access to referrals when higher levels of support outside of the school are necessary for student safety and support. Collaborations with clinical expertise and programs have been established so that our students and their families are able to access support with as little gap to treatment as possible, increasing the likelihood for student success socially, emotionally, and academically.
  - In cases where students receive IEP supports and/or related services, programming will include either in-class or pull-out services with certified special education staff members as an adjunct to, or replacement of, general education staff members. Interventions are provided along a continuum representing the “least restrictive environment” (LRE) for each student. This means that each student will have maximum access to typically developing peers during each school day, while also obtaining the degree of individualized intervention necessary for adequate progress in targeted areas.
  - Select students may also be identified as “twice exceptional” (2E), meaning that by design, interventions and supports must simultaneously address significant identified cognitive potential or “giftedness”, as well as significant identified weakness (i.e., disabling condition) within the context of a “whole student” approach to the teaching-learning process.

The SEL efforts throughout the school buildings are rooted in the notion that people are multidimensional and complex beings. Our definition of education is that academic and social and emotional learning are not separate entities, but rather interconnected in order to achieve and maintain the district's high academic standards. Cutting-edge educational research shows that in order to enrich the academic lives of students, we need to teach all members of our community about:

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills
- Responsible Decision-Making

The Rumson School District has taken great steps in establishing a well-defined structure for delivery of an authentic Multi-Tiered System of Supports. While complementary departments such as Guidance and Special Services are necessary to process/procedures, as are established committees and student plans including I&RS (in cases where team-identified “at risk” students receive planning to include goals, interventions and an associated timeline for duration and monitoring), 504 (in cases where planning removes barriers for students with an identified disabling condition, including services and changes to the learning environment to enable students to learn alongside peers), and IEP (in cases where specially designed and individualized instruction, related services and special education progress monitoring of discrete goals and objectives is required to ensure adequate student progress in the least restrictive educational environment) , the collective goal is that each individual staff member (from administrators to teachers to supportive staff) represents a resource for ALL students and that these resources are available and distributed with careful consideration to individualized needs in the school community.