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INTEGRATING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOR (SEB) SUPPORTS TO ENSURE LONG-TERM STUDENT SUCCESS

System-wide strategies to support students' social and emotional needs and bolster mental health and well-being to accelerate growth

PLAYBOOK

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FOREWORD

Research shows that social-emotional behavior (SEB) functioning plays a critical role in students' academic success. That's never been more true as educators and students cope with the impacts of the pandemic and work to rebuild strong, supportive learning environments that meet the needs of all students.

Supporting the long-term social, emotional, behavior, mental health, and well-being of students takes more than temporary changes to programming. System-level policies, classroom practices, district structures, and even the SEB abilities of educators all play a role in ensuring that students develop the skills and competencies to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

In this playbook, experts delve into various aspects of addressing SEB needs through a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS)—from screening to instruction and intervention—and provide actionable strategies and tactics you and your team can integrate. You'll also find guidance and in-depth discussions around trauma-sensitive practices, culturally sustaining SEL instruction, and reducing exclusionary discipline to ensure that all SEB programs are implemented through an equity lens.

While the focus of policy makers, educators, and communities is rightly on improving learning outcomes for all students, teachers and administrators know that academics do not stand in isolation. Students come to us with experiences, strengths, and needs that influence their ability to learn. By bolstering students' SEB skills and growth and establishing long-term, system-level practices that foster social, emotional, behavioral, and mental well-being, we provide students with a foundation that will accelerate their learning and enable them to achieve their full potential.
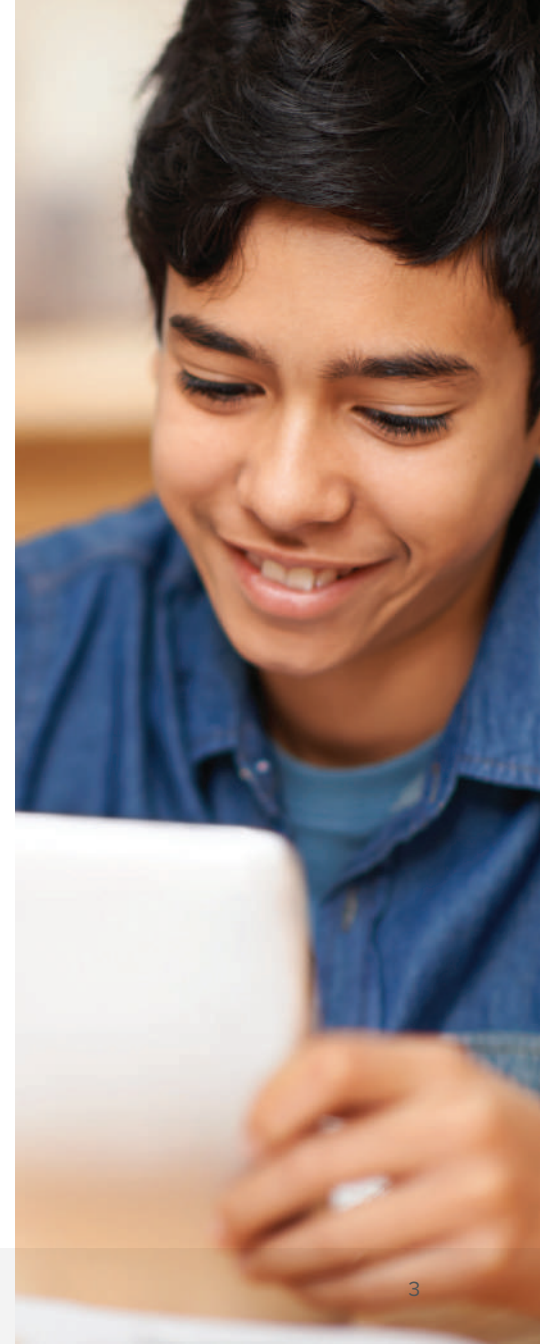
Promoting Students' Mental Health And Well-Being Through A Multi-Tiered System Of Support (MTSS)

Mental health problems have been described as serious changes in the way children typically learn, behave, or handle emotions, which causes distress or challenges getting through the day (Perou et al., 2013). In the United States, approximately one in five children and youth experience mental health challenges, including "externalizing" problems such as inattention, impulsivity, and non-compliance, and "internalizing" problems, including depression, anxiety, and social withdrawal (Merikangas et al., 2010).

The prevalence of mental health needs among children and youth increased following the outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), which the World Health Organization declared a pandemic in March 2020. Multiple studies have reported significant increases in American adolescents' symptoms of depression and anxiety as well as decreases in life satisfaction following the implementation of lockdown measures (De France, 2021; Magson et al., 2021). Similar negative outcomes have been found in samples of students with disabilities (Asbury et al., 2021) and youth from racially and ethnically minoritized backgrounds (Cheah et al., 2020; Penner et al., 2021).

As nearly 80% of all mental health services for children are delivered within the school setting (Rones & Hoagwood, 2000), it is imperative that schools are equipped to identify and address students' mental health needs through systemic, long-term support structures, particularly during and in the aftermath of the pandemic.

School-Based Prevention and Intervention for Mental Health

Within schools and other organizational settings, mental health is most efficiently and effectively promoted within a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). In this framework, various levels of instructional, intervention, and support practices are provided according to individual students' identified needs. By adopting an MTSS and thereby using data to determine which students need what supports, school systems allocate resources in a way that best addresses needs and produces positive student outcomes (Eber et al., 2017).

3 **Tier 3**
Intensive, Individualized Interventions

2 **Tier 2**
Targeted, Group Interventions

1 **Tier 1**
Universal Instruction
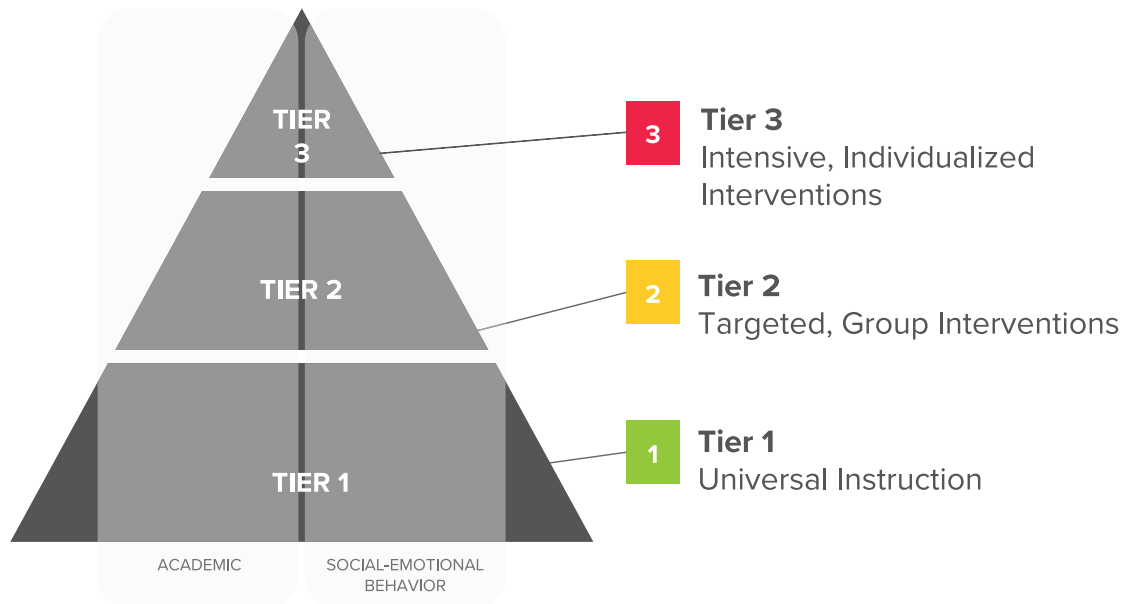
Mental Health Supports for All Students

When supporting mental health through an MTSS framework, Tier 1 universal practices are implemented with all students in a school as a form of primary mental health support.

School-wide practices at Tier 1 may include whole-school safety programming to reduce the likelihood of students experiencing adverse outcomes in schools (Brock, Reeves, & Nickerson, 2014) and school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SWPBIS) to promote more predictable environments marked by more positive and supportive school climates (Bradshaw et al., 2009).

Class-wide practices at Tier I may include trauma-informed classroom management practices and social-emotional learning lessons in the areas of self-regulating emotions and behaviors, developing and maintaining positive identities and relationships, and engaging in responsible decision making (Weissberg et al., 2015). Additionally, school staff can deliver class-wide psychoeducation lessons about stress, trauma, and other conditions to normalize the experience of mental health concerns and teach mental health hygiene.

At the district or organizational level, policies and practices must be prioritized that address disparities in mental health outcomes for students with backgrounds and identities that have been minoritized within the United States, including, but not limited to, students of color and of various gender identities.

Mental Health Supports for Students with Greater Needs

Tier 2 of an MTSS framework serves those students identified as at risk for mental health needs. Tier 2 mental health interventions commonly include targeted skill-based instruction and enhanced social supports.

For example, schools may provide group-based instruction to ameliorate "skill deficits" that underlie different types of internalizing and externalizing concerns, such as needs related to emotion regulation or problem-solving (Clifford, Nguyen, & Bradshaw, 2020). Schools may offer enhanced social supports through mentoring programs that pair a staff member with a student to increase positive social contact and feedback on social and emotional behaviors (e.g., Cook et al., 2015; Lehr et al., 2004).

Tier 3 of an MTSS framework serves those students identified with the greatest needs related to mental health. At Tier 3, students receive intensive—and often individualized—interventions, which may include individual counseling, cognitive-behavioral interventions, wraparound services, and individualized support plans. At this tier, specialized support personnel may play a critical role in designing and delivering intervention practices. It is important to note that Tier 2 and 3 practices are implemented in addition to Tier 1 practices, with supports for mental health strategically layered to comprehensively address students' needs.

Assessment of Mental Health Needs

The provision of mental health services within an MTSS framework relies upon the accurate identification of students presenting with mental health risk and needs. Evidence suggests that students presenting with less observable problems, such as those associated with depression and anxiety, are less likely to be identified by school staff (Gresham & Kern, 2004) and therefore, less likely to receive Tier 2 or 3 services (Bradshaw et al., 2008).

One process for identifying students in need of Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports is universal screening, which can be defined as using efficient tools to evaluate all students in a school for the purpose of identifying those at risk; these systems should be systematic and proactive to be effective and efficient (Cook et al., 2011).

Several universal screeners can detect internalizing and externalizing concerns, have psychometric support in terms of reliability and validity (Allen et al., 2019), and lead to identification of more students at behavioral and emotional risk than do traditional teacher referral methods (Eklund & Dowdy, 2014). Two examples of such screeners are SAEBRS and mySAEBRS. Therefore, universal screening can lead to early intervention and thus positive outcomes, as well as reducing the need for more costly and intensive psychological services (Werner-Seidler et al., 2017).

Evaluating Impact at Each Tier

Monitoring data outcomes and data-based decision making are also critical elements to an MTSS framework.

Outcomes such as number of students receiving mental health supports, staffing supports, and school climate, can help examine the impact of universal mental health programming (Maggin & Mills, 2017). At Tiers 2 and 3, frequent monitoring of student progress through standardized rating scales, observations, or Direct Behavior Ratings are critical to inform decisions related to appropriate student supports across the tiers (Dart et al., 2019; Hoover et al., 2019).

At a time when mental health needs of students are at the forefront, schools should consider adopting an MTSS approach to mental health to provide universal prevention, targeted, and intensive practices for students, as well as a system of high-quality assessments with which to guide decisions. A systemic, data-based approach to supporting students' mental health and well-being establishes long-term best practices for ensuring all students are able to succeed in school and beyond.

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Tier 1 Positive Behavior Supports: Classroom-Level Strategies and District-Level Systems for Supporting Student Success

The United States prevention model for public health and safety has long focused on "universal" strategies that apply to all people, "targeted" strategies that apply to people at risk, and "intensive" strategies for people who have already experienced the negative outcome.

We have seen this approach leveraged in many public health strategies used in our country, such as the promotion of safe driving on the road. At the universal level, prevention programming applies to everyone (e.g., everyone in a car wears a seatbelt). Targeted strategies are put in place for individuals with risk factors that might necessitate additional preventive intervention (e.g., teenage drivers, who are the riskiest, are not allowed to drive after dark and have passenger limits). Finally, for those who demonstrate active driving risk (e.g., an at-fault accident), intensive interventions may be used, such as mandated driving school to review and teach safe driving skills. One of the underappreciated outcomes of these public health and safety efforts is the impact of effectively implemented universal interventions; universal seat belts have saved countless lives.

A multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) is based upon this same tiered approach to intervention. Interventions within these frameworks, especially universal Tier 1 strategies, can be effectively utilized to directly address current concerns about students' social-emotional behavior (SEB) functioning, including any exacerbated challenges resulting from the pandemic school closures. Indeed, the U.S. Department of Education Return to School Roadmap sequences student mental health prior to academic remediation due to lost instructional time. This guidance is important; if students are unable to be engaged with academic instruction, it is unlikely to yield the desired gains.

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Tier 1 SEB Supports as a Driver for Equity

When districts are considering the importance of implementing SEB strategies to promote equity, universal interventions are one of the best starting points. This is because they are implemented for every student as a way to level the playing field.

Indeed, it is often at the targeted or intensified levels where inequality becomes magnified (e.g., disproportionate office discipline referrals, suspensions, or special education placements). Strong universal SEB supports should prevent more intensive interventions from being needed, thus directly and indirectly promoting equity in school practices.

Tier 1 Strategies for Schools and Classrooms

Educators can implement a number of school-wide SEB practices that increase academic success and promote equity.

This begins with a genuine value that education should be wholly student-centered. Not only is it written into federal law that every student is entitled to a free and appropriate education, but it should also be a foundational belief that education systems are there for the student, not the other way around.

Specific practices that can accelerate growth and promote equity include:

1 Universal Screening

When specific strategies at the universal tier are considered, whole school screenings are an important first step. These screeners provide an opportunity for educators to identify students who are thriving and advancing, as well as those who need additional skill-building and supports.

High quality screeners, such as FastBridge, also identify classrooms, grade levels, or areas within the school with concentrated screener-identified domains for follow-up. FastBridge includes both teacher- and self-reported screeners via the SAEBRS and mySAEBRS, respectively; this ensures that the student's own voice is represented in decision making, which is an important component of inclusive practice.

2 Daily Greetings

Greet each student warmly at the beginning of each day and end each day with a warm invitation to have another positive day tomorrow. Although this may sound simple, some children feel "unseen" or may be inadvertently ignored. Opening and closing the school day in this manner ensures that each student is sent a clear and concrete message that they matter and are welcome in the classroom.

3 Praise for Positive Behavior

One of the easiest and most underutilized universal approaches in school settings is the use of praise for appropriate behaviors. Although the evidence is clear that children will increase behaviors that are attended to, the evidence is also clear that the modest levels of praise for appropriate behaviors in schools precipitously declines after kindergarten or first grade to levels of near zero based on objective observations of classroom practice.

4 Structure, Routine, and Clear Expectations

Clear and effective instructions are another way to promote equity in the classroom. The composition of any classroom will include a broad representation of background experiences and student abilities. Thus, it is important to ensure that a classroom includes routines and clear behavioral expectations, and the behavioral requests issued by the teacher are direct. This ensures that every child has a fair opportunity to succeed in the classroom environment as these procedures give students a clear foundation for expectations and reduce the need for teacher follow-up or correction, which is often a trigger for challenging classroom interactions.

The Role of District and School Leadership in Classroom Strategies

Embedded into the conversation of equitable, universal practices is the role of leaders at the school and district levels. Helping educators learn about and use these effective practices is a first step, with continued monitoring and maintenance of use needed to promote sustainability.

Further, use of these strategies can be modelled on the school-wide level, including:

- Call-outs on the morning announcements for students serving as exemplars of positive behavior
- Establishment of clear routines and expectations for shared areas of the school (e.g., hallway, playground, cafeteria)
- Routinely providing feedback to colleagues at the same ratio of three positive comments for every request or demand used for students

Many people hear examples of universal strategies and say, "Yes, I do that already." However, objective observations of schools reveal that there is considerable room for improvement. Therefore, a key goal for educators to promote long-term success and clear barriers to academic growth is to re-double the efforts to promote a welcoming, supporting, and student-centered environment that ultimately propels students to the academic and SEB success that should make every educator and student proud.

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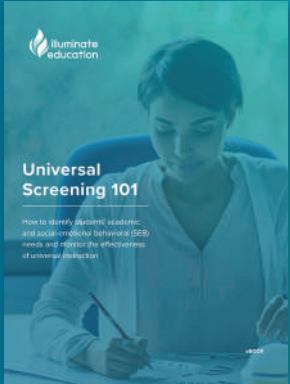
Using Screening Data to Plan Social-Emotional Behavior (SEB) Supports

More and more research suggests that it's not just students' academic skills that lead to overall success in schools. Students' social-emotional behavior (SEB) skills—their positive behaviors, as well as their suppression of more problematic behaviors—are just as important.

We can say that a student is exhibiting SEB competence when:

- They display certain skills that allow them to get along with adults and peers, as well as navigate classroom contexts

- They are not displaying problematic behaviors
  - o Externalizing behaviors (e.g., disruptive behavior, non-compliance, aggression)
  - o Internalizing behaviors (e.g., depression, anxiety)

In order to measure these skills, districts can implement a universal screening tool that's designed to measure SEB functioning. Yet one of the most common questions I hear from district teams is: *Now that we have our data, what do we do with them?*

Learn more about universal screening for SEB and academic needs.

Download the eBook

5 Steps to Screening Data Analysis & Use

There's no one right answer that will work for every school district. However, there are certain protocols that schools can follow to leverage SEB screening data to understand needs and align sustainable, targeted supports that improve students' outcomes.

STEP 1: Define Serviceable Base Rates

A *base rate* is the percentage of students who happen to be at risk within a particular environment—whether that's across the district, within a school, or within an individual classroom.

"Serviceable Base Rates" or "SBRs" can be defined as the percentage of students that teams think they can feasibly support, based upon existing resources and personnel (e.g., school psychologists, social workers). Districts commonly find that their SBR is 20%. However, the SBR may vary, with some schools finding that theirs is higher or lower.

Serviceable Base Rates
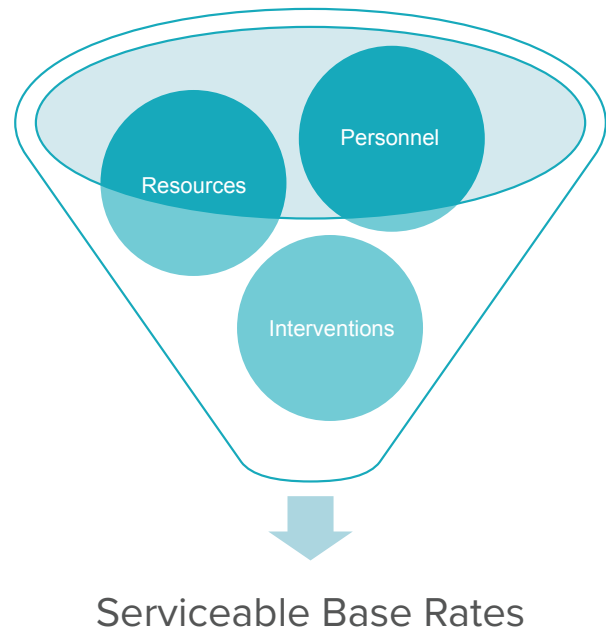
STEP 2: Examine Observed Base Rates

Once the SBRs have been identified, teams go through a multistep process to determine whether supports are needed at a school-wide level, class-wide level, or individual student level.

• **School-wide Base Rate:** First, teams should start by examining how SBRs compare to observed base rates at the school-wide level. If screening data indicate that the percentage of students who are at risk within a school exceeds the school's SBR, an initial course of action would be to evaluate actions happening in the universal Tier 1 level. This may include implementing systematic, school-wide interventions for the first time—such as a social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum or Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports (PBIS) —or adjusting and refining existing supports.

• **Class-wide Base Rates:** If there is not a school-wide need, the next step is to evaluate base rates within each classroom. If a teacher sees that a higher percentage of students are at risk than the SBR, they can use class-wide strategies that provide support to many students at once, rather than attempting to provide a large number of individualized interventions to students. Doing so also provides useful additional supports to students who may not necessarily be at risk, but can still benefit from the additional supports.

• **Individual Students:** Finally, after analyzing school-wide and class-wide needs, the last step is to identify individual students who may need either Tier 2 small group or Tier 3 individualized interventions.
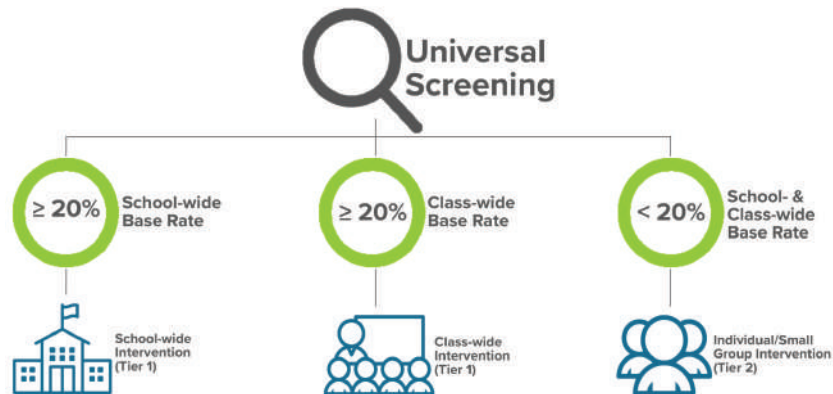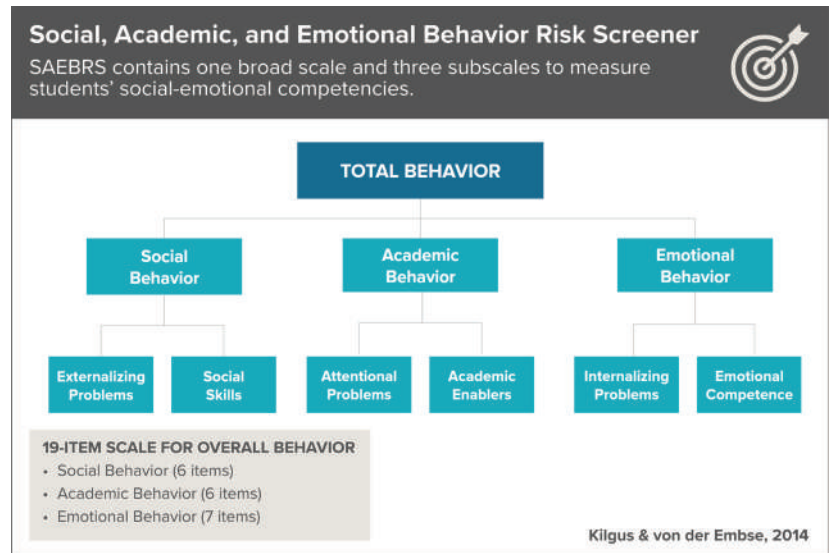
STEP 3: Examine Subscale Scores to Align Supports

After the team has identified the level for service delivery (school-wide, class-wide, or individual student level), the next step is to examine subscale scores to identify potentially appropriate interventions and supports.

Teams should examine the subscores in their high-quality SEB screening data to determine where the need exists to guide the selection of a grade-appropriate, research-based intervention that is designed to support that specific area of need.

An Example: Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS)

As an example, Social, Academic, Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS) provides a Total Behaviors score, which is a good indicator of an overall student risk. It also shows how students are doing socially, emotionally, and academically. SAEBRS measures both problematic items (indicating the students exhibiting difficulty in one of these three areas), as well as positive items (indicating how students are doing well in that area), to get an understanding of how a student is doing in each of these three domains. SAEBRS also provides the subscale scores which correspond to a student's social, academic, and emotional functioning.

Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener

SAEBRS contains one broad scale and three subscales to measure students' social-emotional competencies.

TOTAL BEHAVIOR

Social Behavior — Externalizing Problems, Social Skills
Academic Behavior — Attentional Problems, Academic Enablers
Emotional Behavior — Internalizing Problems, Emotional Competence

19-ITEM SCALE FOR OVERALL BEHAVIOR
- Social Behavior (6 items)
- Academic Behavior (6 items)
- Emotional Behavior (7 items)

Kilgus & von der Embse, 2014

When examining the data in Figure A, the team made a few different decisions:

- At the sixth-grade level, even though emotional risk levels were somewhat elevated, they focused more on the elevated levels of social and academic behavior problems. This led to them choosing particular supports that are appropriate for sixth graders and aligned with social and academic functioning.

- At the eighth-grade level, the school had particularly heightened levels of emotional behavior problems, which led them to choose supports for students on the emotional side.

There is never one right answer—it's about using the data to supplement your existing understanding of students and classroom level needs to guide supports.

FIGURE A

% of Student At Risk Within Subscale By Grade
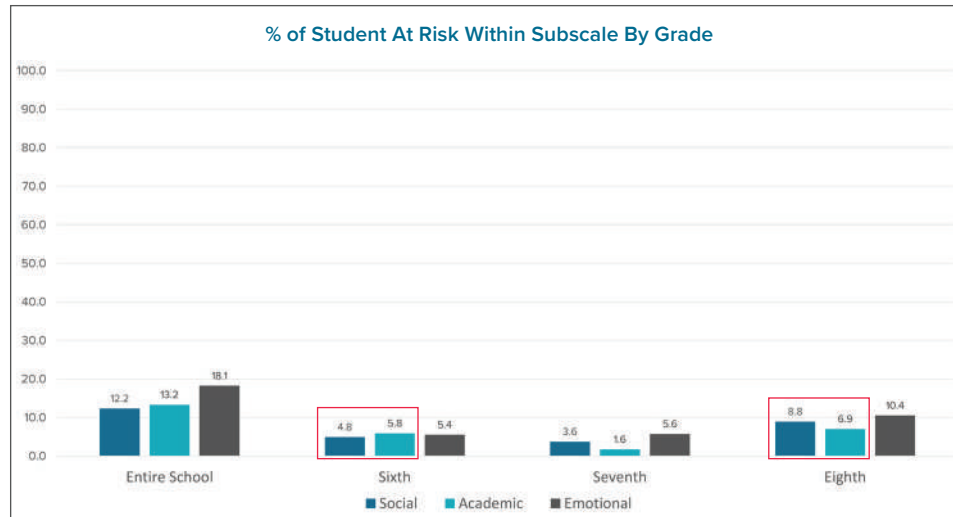
STEP 4: Integrate Screening Scores with Additional Data Sources to Guide Appropriate Supports

Collecting and analyzing additional data beyond universal screening helps teams determine the most appropriate course of action.

Additional relevant data may include:

- **School-wide, Universal Supports (Tier 1)**
  - o <u>PBIS Fidelity:</u> Ensure that existing universal supports around PBIS are being delivered with fidelity. There are many tools available to support this, but the most common ones are Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) and the Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ).
  - o <u>SEL Fidelity:</u> Examine the extent that the various aspects of SEL Tier 1 instruction are being implemented. For support, look at the CASEL Indicators of Schoolwide SEL Walkthrough Protocol.

- **School Climate Data:** Is it possible that SEB is not improving because students do not perceive the school to be an effective and supportive environment?

- **Classroom-level Supports (Tier 1):** Enable teachers to evaluate themselves with regard to classroom practices, and utilize various observation tools and practices to identify classroom support needs.

- **Individual or Small-Group Interventions and Supports**
  - Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs): These are especially useful when teams think contingency management interventions might be in order. They help discover why a student is displaying problem behavior. Research shows that when interventions are function-based, students are more likely to be successful.
  - Skill Assessments: If the problem behavior is rooted in an SEB skill gap, these assessments identify the specific skill gap for each student. They help teachers align a support that is most relevant to the student's need.

Learn more about aligning interventions to school and student needs.

Watch the webinar on demand.
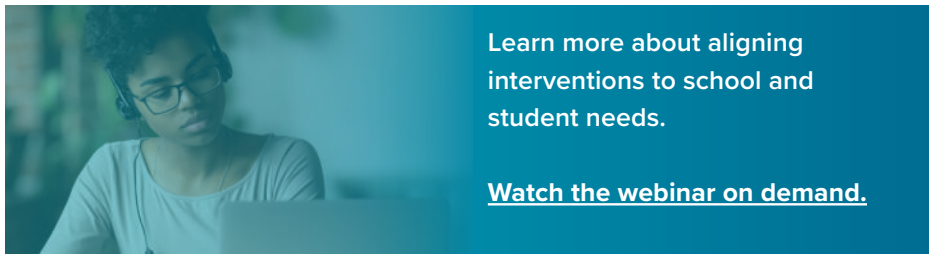
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A More Holistic Data Story: Leveraging Observed Behavior Data to Drive Student and School Supports

The Data Story

Holistic data profiles tell our students' stories. When we recognize data profiles as multidimensional, teams uncover the beauty of how analyzing distinct data pieces in a whole child context brings **cohesiveness** and richness to the story.

Data-driven decision making relies on our ability to uncover hidden messages and solve mysteries in these data stories. When we dive deeper into each chapter, a more accurate understanding unfolds that is **multi-faceted** and **multi-layered**. Individual chapters rely on their connectedness to draw the reader in and make sense of the fuller story. When educators have the entire data story, each chapter becomes more meaningful; our understanding of the 'why' behind each need more profound.

Uncovering the 'Why'

Although most federal and state mandates are predicated on academic data to tell the story of scholars, academic skill is only one piece of the story. If we needed a reminder of this, the COVID-19 pandemic has answered the call and shed light on the outcomes of scholars during their school careers, not the least of which are how social-emotional behavior (SEB) factors impact academic progress. But knowing a score is not enough. Teams must analyze data at a deeper level to understand what the score represents and uncover the **'why'** behind it.

This examination must be rooted in a **strengths-based** (not deficit-based) lens to effectively align supports. Teams must focus on what can be built and how they can support development. Teams can easily group scholars by skill level, but where do they go from there? Knowing an issue exists is necessary, but insufficient, for **strategic alignment** of resources to build students' skills.

This examination must be rooted in a strengths-based (not deficit-based) lens to effectively align supports. Teams must focus on what can be built and how they can support development.

An Example:

Brayden and Joaquin have the exact same raw academic data: they each have scores on broad and narrow math measures that indicate gaps in foundational skills and lack of grade-level standards mastery. But do both students require the same supports? Would both equally benefit if provided the same intervention?

What if we add a layer to the data story and see that Brayden has additional SEB concerns evidenced by SAEBRS/mySAEBRS, while Joaquin does not? Aha! This additional layer informs our next decisions—that we may need to look at the data through a **diagnostic** lens to more narrowly pinpoint the 'why,' so that our responses are **differentiated** and effective.

While Brayden may require supports to build executive functioning and social supports, we may find that Joaquin needs support in building number sense and base 10 operations skills through the CRA model (conceptual, representative, and abstract). Same initial score, but two distinctly different data stories.

Central Questions:

• Is the 'why' based on a need to build foundational academic skills, teach and reinforce SEB protective factors, or both? Are resources strategically aligned to the identified need?

• Is the teams' lens strength-based and focused on what can be taught and reinforced?

Consistency in Language, Methodology, and Use

As we allow each data chapter to unfold, teams must gather data through lenses that are multifaceted and offer a 360° view:

- **Multi-modal:** Record reviews; direct observations; rating scales

- **Multi-source:** Teacher and student ratings

- **Multi-domain:** Social, academic, and emotional behaviors

- **Multi-setting:** Different settings; teacher ratings from different content

This greater context offers us clues to solving the mystery at hand and enables us to use data to drive our decision making. Though SEB needs tug on our own emotions, aligning student supports is not the time for 'gut' or 'heart' assessments. We cannot base our decisions on what we feel or think, we must know; when we have data to validate our thoughts, teams move from simply having an opinion to objectively stating what is grounded in facts, removed from emotion.

The first step to this data-based approach to aligning SEB supports is to ensure all team members speak a **common SEB and data collection language**. For example, each educator must understand exactly what another means when they use the phrase 'does not complete assigned work.' Does this mean the scholar does not begin the task, does not persevere, or completes the task but never turns it in?

Once we have the common language for 'what' (multimodal evidenced across multiple sources of information), teams must also **track observed behaviors**. Moreover, they must track them in the same way to ensure reliability and validity of the data set. When recording data, consider what information is important to know to better unpack the mystery of 'why' an SEB need exists. For example, educators should track:

- When a behavior occurs (multidomain—social, academic, or emotional events)

- What setting(s) the behavior occurs (multisetting)

- With what audience (multisource)

- For how long (multimodal; time vs. event)

Think of Brayden and Joaquin. What if Brayden has the same difficulty across all content areas, but the severity increases on Monday after a longer break? What if Joaquin has difficulty only in math assignments, but has a flawless record of performance in all other content areas?

Central Questions:

- Do teams have a common language to describe behaviors and to code and interpret SEB data?

- Have teams analyzed data across all facets—multiple modes, domains, sources, and settings?

Finding Patterns & Aligning Supports

How do we turn this data into actionable and meaningful supports for schools, classes, and individual students? This is where the examination of trends is crucial.

Schools

If school-wide data tells us verbal and physical behavior incidents are reported more frequently during transition and lunchtime, we know to build our supports into this less structured and often less supervised time. For example, all staff can report to a station during this time to both add a layer of supervision and increase the opportunity for meaningful engagement with students: give a quick fist bump, comment on a great play during a sporting event, give praise for positive interaction. Even just smiling and acknowledging a student by name can change the trajectory of the day.

Classes and Groups

Analyzing patterns and trends for big picture, high-level data is certainly important for driving system-level resources where they're needed by all students. The most powerful next step for teachers to take is to continue peeling back the layers. Using a group analysis initially assists you with knowing how to support the class as a whole and identify those resources and supports that will benefit all scholars but are necessary for many. Consider questions such as:

- If a grade-wide issue exists for high rates of discipline entries and suspensions, does that issue exist at the class level?
- Does it exist only for a distinct group of scholars within the class? A single scholar?

Teams must also analyze what can be accomplished on a personal relationship level. Outside of the positive supports the district and/or school may provide, what can individual teachers do to make sense of the data and implement strategic supports?
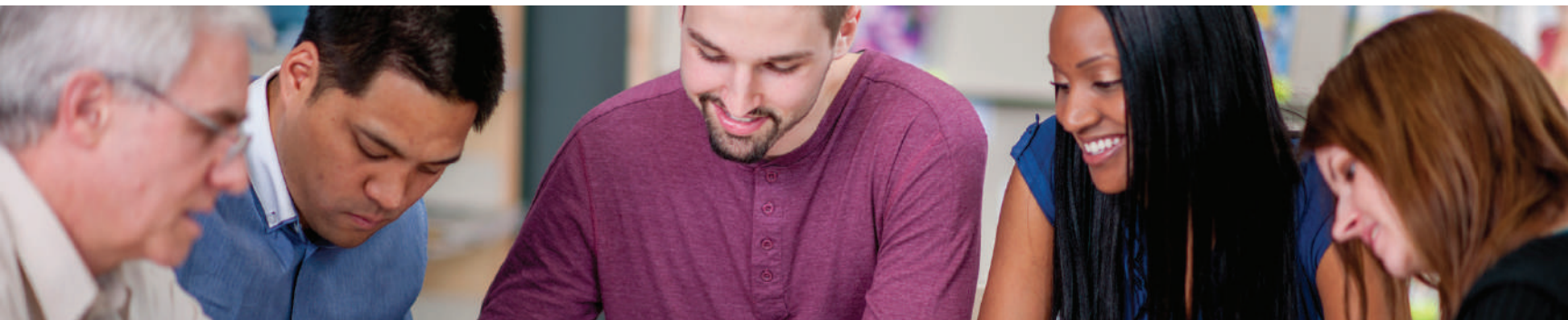
Students

More data and more analyses are needed to dive deeper into the content of the individual data story and to solve the mystery of 'why' for **individual** scholars.

By narrowing their focus on investigating individual needs, teachers are able to design and implement supports strategically. There should be no guessing at what is needed or if an intervention will work; teachers must utilize data at the individual level to provide specific supports aligned to student need and measure the effectiveness of those supports in order to know when and how to pivot.

Think again of Brayden's data profile, which includes not only scores from SEB screeners (SAEBRS and mySAEBRS), but also observed behaviors.

Observed behavior components may include the number of times Brayden exhibited withdrawal when in group settings (a great self-report activity), the percentage of disruptive or respectful behavior incidents (another great self-report activity that can be accompanied with guided reflective feedback), or the percentage of academic engagement in each instructional block.

The district team highlighted students with 'fevers' on the total SEB domain, while the school leadership team drilled further and isolated that need to exist in the social domain specifically.

Brayden's self-report indicated the need to build skills in how to approach/engage with peers in group settings and respond respectfully in both tone and gesture.

The student's teacher drilled further to see the need to embed opportunities for structured collaboration into the instructional block. They offered **explicit instruction** and structures on what effective collaboration with peers looks like, including **modeling**, providing **frequent opportunities for practice**, and **immediate feedback**. By building this structure into the instructional block to improve the skill set that is necessary for one (but good for all), the trajectory of the story will be changed.

When you join individual efforts by **deferring to expertise** and **collaborating** with school counselors to offer small group and/or individual opportunities for a scholar to build relationship skills in a safe environment, your team removes risk and allows for **authentic opportunities** for practice and guided feedback to **generalize** learned (and practiced) skills across settings.

When we have data that provides a 360° view, we have the opportunity to align 360° supports.

Central Questions:

• What trends are present in our observed behavior data?

• How do we align resources to meet those Tier 1 SEB needs?

• What skills need to be explicitly taught, modeled, and reinforced to intensify intervention for individual students?

When we have data that provides a 360° view, we have the opportunity to align 360° supports.

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Culturally Sustaining Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Pedagogy

The richness of diversity within the American K–12 public school student landscape should be viewed by educators as encouraging for students, their families, and entire school communities. Throughout the past several decades, as classrooms have become more ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse, many educators have celebrated diversity as inspiring, beautiful, empowering, and unifying. Maya Angelou believed that "we all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color."

However, depending on what individual educators value and emphasize, many still view students' differences as deficits or face challenges with how to provide schooling experiences that maximize the participation and academic success of our nation's diverse student population.

Several years ago, after teaching mostly middle and high school students, I taught a group of culturally diverse and emotionally intelligent first grade students. I personally linked their emotional intelligence to their outgoing personalities, academic potential, and diverse cultures as we together learned to use culture as our foundation for how to communicate effectively, empathize with peers, overcome peer-related challenges, and recognize the self-proclaimed array of lived experiences and skills attributed to every student in the classroom. Our favorite subjects were literature and social studies.

As a result, I often used literature both to supplement students' engagement and understanding of academic content and to foster a sense of empathy and understanding for everyone's cultural lived experiences. I distinctly remember teaching a lesson focused on empathy and culture using the Caldecott Medal Winner and African folktale, *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*. After reading the book together, our subsequent classroom discussions evoked my students' understanding of culture and social-emotional learning demonstrated by the characters in the folktale. Our discourse also encouraged students to reflect on their own experiences of connecting culture and SEL throughout their daily lives.

Developing an Equitable, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

My first-grade students easily and accurately defined culture as the way in which they live and behave, and everything they do, eat, and believe within their homes, schools, and communities. We agreed that students' culture is fluid from day to day and year to year and that learning occurs more successfully when the social and cultural backgrounds of students are known and utilized. In addition to implementing these observations of astute first graders, it is essential for teachers to form relationships with students and to use those relationships to facilitate learning through social interaction and active participation within the learning environment.

On many occasions, teachers have expressed to me how difficult it is to realistically and authentically learn the cultures of all of their students in an effort to become more culturally inclusive. They also find it challenging to supplement their Eurocentric curricula to include the cultural backgrounds of students of color while still adhering to the state and local standards. Still, research has proven that students of color feel empowered when the curricula is inclusive of their cultures (Banks, 2010).

The following are a few ideas teachers may consider incorporating into teaching and learning as they work to become a more culturally responsive educator:

- **Examine your own cultural beliefs, assumptions, stereotypes, values, and biases.** This process is critical to fully engaging students in learning and bridging the disconnect between student and teacher cultural backgrounds.

- **Evaluate your instructional practices.** Ask yourself the question, "Whose culture counts?" When preparing to teach, think about whose culture matters based on how learning is endorsed within the "standard" curriculum. Be prepared to supplement your curriculum with authors of books that include myriad voices, histories, and cultures and that recognize the knowledge value that various ethnic groups have contributed.

- **Encourage the use of "student voice," which is often used as a data collection method to determine whether student cultures are being acknowledged and valued in the classroom from students' perspectives.** Students are rarely asked about their perceptions of culture and cultural influence. By tapping into student voices, teachers will begin to understand that the facilitation of culturally responsive teaching is beneficial for relationship building, fostering inclusiveness, and positively influencing classroom culture (Samuels, 2018).

Developing a Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy for SEL

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), "SEL is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" (Niemi, 2020). Culturally sustaining pedagogy recognizes and uses the community cultural wealth and cultural backgrounds of students of color to support and sustain their ways of knowing and learning.

As was identified earlier, because educators often differ in cultural background from their students, prioritizing culturally responsive practices is paramount to supporting culturally sustaining SEL instruction and intervention. It is not uncommon for teachers to use the same SEL practices for all of their students, including ethnically and linguistically diverse students.

Teachers can begin to endorse and advocate for the sustainability of culturally responsive SEL practices that actively draw upon students' diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges as a strategy to deepen and sustain learning.

In actuality, using students' lived experiences to support culturally responsive SEL practices is more personalized and effective in the long run. Ultimately, fostering a culturally sustaining pedagogy for SEL requires school-wide and home support for the selection of evidence-based SEL programming to help students develop social-emotional competencies as well as to enhance their academic achievement. Of course, training on the staff's efficacy for culturally responsive practices and evidence-based SEL programs is essential for a smooth and effective culturally sustaining SEL learning environment (Barnes & McCallops, 2019).

Conclusion

Throughout my 30+ years as an educator, it's been an eye-opener to witness the abundance of knowledge gained by American public educators from their K–12 students, families, and school communities. Students genuinely are the experts on their lives and cultures. Nevertheless, educators haven't always recognized the cultural value that students bring with them from their unique communities. It's vitally important for teachers to embrace and accept students' cultures and diverse values which have the potential to drive our beliefs, assumptions, behaviors, and how we maintain "normalcy" within our classrooms. The information within this article, along with many valuable evidence-based resources, are available to assist teachers with understanding the relationship between our students' cultures and the dominant culture in America. Armed with that knowledge, teachers can begin to endorse and advocate for the sustainability of culturally responsive SEL practices that actively draw upon students' diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges as a strategy to deepen and sustain learning.

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Incorporating Trauma-Sensitive Practices into a Student-Centered Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

In all schools, there are students and staff that have experienced trauma, adversity, and chronic stress. A trauma event is defined as any experience that is significantly disturbing or negatively impactful causing psychological distress. Most recently, COVID and the related economic and social justice issues have directly affected educators, community members, students, and families in numerous ways. The pandemic has both highlighted and exacerbated the inequities that already exist in schools and society.

These challenges in schools are not new, but the fact that anyone can be exposed to events that leave an enduring impact and generate the increased need for supports has been brought to the forefront. Prior to the pandemic, schools across the country had experienced an uptick in students experiencing trauma and struggling with mental health concerns and an increase in youth suicide. As we work to recover from the pandemic and other cultural and social stressors, predictions from the Department of Health for the near future forecast that these percentages are only growing.

In this context, schools have a responsbility to address and reduce the effects of trauma and stress on students, parents, and staff. Trauma-sensitive practices are specifically designed to recognize and mitigate the impacts of trauma, adversity, and chronic stress. This includes developing policies and practices that foster well-being and resilience as a foundation for learning and development.

The MTSS framework provides a structure for districts and schools to organize and integrate supports for students and is well positioned for the incorporation of trauma-sensitive practices at all levels. Districts can develop a comprehensive plan for integrating and enhancing services and supports by:

- Analyzing data related to the current cultural, economic, social-emotional, and mental health needs and strengths of their staff, students, and families; and

- Creating attainable and measurable goals related to support around those needs, while leveraging the identified strengths.

Download a free tool from Drs. Lynass and Walker to self-assess the trauma-sensitive practices in your classroom.

Trauma-Sensitive Practices in the Universal Tier

In providing trauma-sensitive supports, the universal tier is an essential place to start because it focuses on the supports for every member of the school community.

Trauma-sensitive practices should integrate and align with other Tier 1 approaches with shared goals within an MTSS, including:

- Equity-focused social-emotional learning (SEL);

- Restorative justice practices; and

- Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) strategies to create a warm and welcoming learning environment.

Within the universal tier, we can also easily integrate strategies and skills that promote wellness and positive life skills, which can prevent or reduce mental health issues from developing. A learning environment that communicates predictability and consistency for staff, students, and families can help to mitigate the impacts of trauma and chronic stress. At every level, this learning context messages, "You are safe and valued here." This is important because a safe and predictable environment allows individuals to relax so that their brains and bodies can shift from a potential state of threat or alert into one that is able to reset and engage with learning.

Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment

The first step towards creating this type of supportive environment is to help staff understand the characteristics of chronic stress and trauma and invite staff to reflect on and share their own experiences and needs. Restorative circles and community meetings are excellent tools for this step in the process. Exploring strategies of ongoing self-care and wellness and integrating them into school schedules and calendars are also essential.

Using the core Tier 1 practices for social-emotional behavior (SEB) supports, schools can promote predictable, positive, safe, and consistent environments by developing systems that prioritize:

- Creating and sustaining caring connections

- Establishing and teaching shared expectations

- Building a meaningful acknowledgement system

- Developing transparent, equitable responses for behavioral issues

One example of a trauma-sensitive Tier 1 universal support that's increasingly prevalent in schools is the development of a calming or reset space in every classroom. These spaces provide students with a dedicated physical space, tools, and strategies to help them regain calm when they become stressed or dysregulated. In this Tier 1 practice, students are taught strategies for self-regulation and

calming, and are invited to access the calming space whenever needed. This allows them to remain in the classroom during instruction, but to practice strategies for self-regulation and stress management that will serve them throughout their lifetimes. By teaching students when and how to use these strategies, schools acknowledge the impact of stress and adversity and encourage self-awareness and self-care, while promoting stress management and enabling continued academic instruction.

Trauma-Sensitive Practices in Tier 2 and Tier 3 Supports

Providing trauma-sensitive classroom supports for students with emerging or intensive needs is a priority for educators.

Here it is important to remember that an MTSS provides for a higher dosage and, when needed, individualized supports for students most in need that are added onto the foundation of Tier 1 services.

For example, to provide additional support to students with more emerging or intensive Tier 2 or 3 SEB needs, one district's Tier 2/Tier 3 team created Individualized Support Plan Backpacks. Each backpack is equipped with visual supports, first/then charts, reinforcement charts, a variety of sensory and calming items, and data tracking tools for teachers and staff. These additional supports were integrated with the universal classroom-based calming space options to provide for the unique, additional needs of these students.

In a school that is implementing a school-wide social-emotional curriculum at the universal level, the Tier 2/Tier 3 student supports team might work with the teacher to identify specific SEB skills that a student needs more support in developing. The team could then provide that additional SEB development in a focused small group. Within the classroom the teacher would follow up with encouraging the use of the new skills and acknowledging the student frequently.

Both the MTSS framework and trauma-sensitive practices point educators towards a systemic, integrated, and compassionate approach to meeting the range of needs and abilities present in our schools today. In a very literal way, these approaches help schools become the village needed to support all learners.

In a very literal way, these approaches help schools become the village needed to support all learners.

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Promoting Resilience and Social-Emotional Well-Being Among Educators: Organizational and Individual Strategies for Mitigating Stress and Trauma

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation..."
Audre Lorde

"There is a cost to caring."
Charles Figley

It is still too soon to fully understand the impact of the pandemic on K–12 education and educators. Teaching has always been, and still is, a highly challenging and stressful profession (Easter, 2021). A recent RAND Corporation study found stress to be the central contributing factor for educators leaving the profession, both during the pandemic and in the years immediately prior (Diliberti, M. K., Schwartz, H. L., & Grant, D. 2021).

Research also shows that the pandemic has only exacerbated stressors felt by educators. In a recent survey of K–12 educators working during the pandemic, 41% indicated a substantial increase in work hours; 55% indicated the nature of their work was impacted significantly; and 6 in 10 had to cope with their own children being home while trying to do their jobs (Mission Square

Research Institute, February 2021). Forty-one percent of teachers reported being less motivated in their work during the pandemic (Will, 2021). For many teachers, interaction with students is one of the great rewards of teaching, and remote learning environments have made those connections harder to establish and maintain.

How Teacher Well-Being Impacts Learning

Jennings and Greenberg (2009) describe what follows the accumulation of stress and exhaustion as the "burnout cascade." The burnout cascade is marked by the deterioration of classroom climate as characterized by increased levels of conflict and problematic student behaviors, inappropriate emotional expressions, disruptive communication and interactions with others, and poor problem-solving. Teachers' responses become more reactive and punitive which, in turn, contributes to even greater disruptive student behavior, and the waterfall continues.

The well-being of teachers is important because they set the tone of the classroom. Socially and emotionally competent teachers are equipped to sustain a classroom marked by "developing supportive and encouraging relationships with their students, designing lessons that build on student strengths and abilities, establishing and implementing behavioral guidelines in ways that promote intrinsic motivation, coaching students through conflict situations, encouraging cooperation among students, and acting as a role model for respectful and appropriate communication and exhibitions of prosocial behavior" (Jennings et al., 2009).

Moreover, we also know that teacher attrition reduces student achievement, impedes the ability of schools to build coherent curricula, and creates additional expenditures for districts who need to screen and hire teacher replacements (Sorenson and Ladd, 2019).

Exposure to Trauma and Secondary Traumatic Stress

Research indicates that one in five children experience adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and this number increases among children ages 12 to 17 (NCSEA Report, 2019). Educators can expect to encounter students with ACEs at some point in their career whether these students are specifically identified or not.

Throughout the pandemic and in the aftermath, educators are faced with not only dealing with their own stress, but also being on the frontlines for the experiences of their students. In an effort to "be there" for their learners, educators are exposed to the traumas their students experience and bring into the learning environment, including poverty, grief, family problems, racism, addiction, and more.

For professions like firefighters, law enforcement, trauma doctors and nurses, child welfare workers, therapists, and case managers, there is a growing recognition of the effects on the provider in working with those in trauma.

The National Child Trauma Stress Network (NCTSN) defines secondary traumatic stress (STS), as "the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another." STS is also known as "vicarious trauma" or "compassion fatigue." Educators can experience the same symptoms that students of trauma exhibit: withdrawal, anxiety, depression, and chronic fatigue (Walker, 2019). Educators "may recognize the cumulative stressors that they face, but they don't always realize that their symptoms are a common reaction to working with traumatized children—and that these symptoms have a name" (Lander, 2018). Emerging research indicates STS can affect teachers' well-being, health, and professional practice (Lander, 2018).

Organizational & Individual Supports for Social-Emotional Well-Being of Educators

As districts and schools prepare long-term structures for supporting student success, the social and emotional well-being of teachers is as important as that of the students.

Within the conversations regarding accelerated learning, we must guard against focusing on academic growth at the expense of the social-emotional well-being of students or educators. Moreover, we must provide ways to heal and restore both organizationally and individually.

As districts and schools prepare long-term structures for supporting student success, the social and emotional well-being of teachers is as important as that of the students.

Organizational Supports

At the organizational level, this begins with open communication, creating a culture of awareness, and developing a trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive environment in schools and districts.

Open Communication

Open communication is of paramount importance to addressing and alleviating some of the anxiety and uncertainty teachers feel. Recommendations coming out of the RAND Corporation include involving teachers and other educators in the identification of stressors, which can actually reduce the stress that they feel (Diliberti et al., 2019).

Navigating and recovering from the pandemic can also offer an opportunity to refresh policies around teacher roles. Perhaps, configurations of shared teaching roles, co-teaching, and other arrangements for teaching and learning can offer teachers greater control of their schedule.

Creating a Culture of Awareness

Creating a culture of awareness around mental health and STS conditions offers educators language and a way of naming what they are experiencing. While we have recognized teacher burnout, doing so can imply that the individual educators' ability to cope is linked to their ability as an educator. The message of "self-care" must be the new narrative.

The National Council of State Education Associations (NCSEA), in partnership with the NEA Center for Great Public Schools (2019), offers several recommendations for promoting self-care based on their comprehensive look at trauma.

- Employee mental health and assistance programs are essential in the support of educators at all levels in the system.

- Wrap-around services for students as well as educators promotes a true learning community.

- Engaging students, families, educators, and the community provides ways of intervening in the cycle of disengagement and the burnout cascade.

- Lastly, other helping professions have found that peer support groups offer a mechanism for emotional collaboration and cooperation. Providing space and professional assistance for educators can provide a form of resilience or wellness coaching (Lander, 2019).

Trauma-Sensitive Environments

The emerging research around students with ACEs has led greater numbers of districts and schools to develop trauma-informed or trauma-sensitive learning environments. The very foundation of these environments relies on teachers understanding trauma and giving educators the tools to better work with students having experienced trauma and also recognizing and building the capacity for educators to address their own compassion fatigue. Teacher professional development is integral in this process. "These teacher behaviors are associated with optimal social and emotional classroom climate and desired student outcomes" (Jennings et al., 2009).

Individual Strategies

Individually, educators can look to develop awareness, balance, and connection. The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders identifies six dimensions of trauma-informed self-care: mind, emotions, physical, relationships, work, and spirit (April 2020). Strategies that support awareness, balance, and connection in each of these dimensions builds capacity for resilience.

Awareness

Educators need the ability to be observant and aware of stress and to notice when their "emotional elevator" is amiss. The utilization of techniques like mindfulness (e.g., body scans, breath awareness exercises) or other contemplative practices (e.g., yoga, movement) can begin to attune one's attention and focus. This also includes positive self-talk to refrain and refocus negative thoughts and stories.

Balance

Intentionally making time to refresh and rejuvenate all dimensions: mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually, and social relations in both personal and professional lives. Educators can determine what gives them joy in each area and intentionally schedule time for these things. If they find gaps in any of the dimensions, they can work to find something to fill them.

Connection

As social beings we naturally thrive when we feel grounded, connected with others, a sense of purpose and meaning, and can see a "bigger picture."

Promoting a sense of thriving, not just surviving or getting through the academic year, provides an opportunity to build and enhance resilience for both educators and their students.

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Using Data to Guide Effective, Learner-Centered Tier 2 and Tier 3 SEB Interventions

In a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework, educators are guided to provide whole child supports with an initial focus on addressing any Tier 1 needs present in the district, school, grade, or class. Once any needed Tier 1 intensifications are put in place, teams can then turn their attention to identifying students who may need Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports in order to succeed.

When analyzing whole child data to identify students in need of Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions—including social-emotional behavior (SEB) supports—teams should first ask:

- Do we have enough data to determine a need?

- Are the data reliable?

- Are the data valid?

- Could there be any biases in the data?

Ensuring high-quality data is essential to impactful decision making. This includes using research-based, valid, and reliable assessment tools and ensuring reliable, accurate, and unbiased recording of office- and classroom-managed behaviors—the latter of which is typically predicated by appropriate professional development and establishing a common language around SEB data and supports. Teams should also be able to triangulate SEB data alongside academic and other whole child data to determine if a need in one area is potentially causing a need in another.

If these analyses determine that a Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention is needed, the next step is to use data to identify an appropriate intervention aligned to the student's need. Data should be used to unpack whether the "target behavior" is:

- due to a missing SEB skill, requiring instruction to help build that skill; or

- serving a purpose or fueled by a motivation.

Knowing this is essential to aligning an appropriate, research-based intervention that's likely to help the student succeed.

Screening for SEB Skill Needs

Just as universal screening data can be used to guide Tier 1 interventions for SEB (and academics), they can also be used to group students for Tier 2 SEB supports and inform Tier 3 SEB individualized interventions.

Conducting SEB screening with a research-based, valid, and reliable assessment tool, such as SAEBRS and mySAEBRS, provides data around both the absence of problematic behaviors and presence of positive SEB skills among students. Analyzing subscore data helps educators more deeply understand specific skill needs (Kilgus, 2021).

With visibility into any SEB skill gaps being demonstrated by their students, targeted skill instruction can be aligned to help students develop the SEB skills they need to succeed. It's important to note that, especially when aligning Tier 3 individual supports, additional data from targeted skill assessments and other whole child data should be analyzed to ensure appropriate alignment.

Understanding Motivations

Other students may demonstrate a problematic behavior despite knowing how to display an appropriate one, indicating that the target behavior is not rooted in a skill gap. Rather, the target behavior may be serving a function (Kilgus & von der Embse, 2021). In this case, teams can analyze trends in antecedent and function of behavior data to best match an SEB intervention.

Antecedents

Antecedents are the events or situations that occur immediately before a behavior according to the National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII). As an example, an educator asks a student to read aloud, and the student then leaves the classroom because the learner doesn't like peer attention. Here, the antecedent is the educator asking the student to read aloud.

When educators know where students' strengths lie and where they need support, they can better predict the antecedents of target behaviors and alter the learning environment to promote positive outcomes. For example, if the student demonstrates positive behavior during peer interactions, an educator can incorporate more group activities within instruction and be strategic in the peer groupings. But in order to use antecedents to inform supports, those data need to be collected.

Adjusting behavior incident data entry forms to record antecedents can clue Tier 2 and Tier 3 teams into the triggers that lead to a target behavior. Using a selection list in the data entry form codifies the data and makes them easier to chart and analyze in a data platform that supports whole child data analysis, such as eduCLIMBER—as opposed to trying to extract the information from open-ended descriptions in text fields.

Something as simple as the following would suffice:

- Educator request: Academic
- Educator request: SEB
- Peer request: Academic
- Peer request: SEB
- Educator request: Other
- Peer request: Other

To reiterate, the value of observed behavior data, such as antecedents, begins with ensuring that educators are recording data that is accurate, consistent, and unbiased. Recording unbiased behavior incident data requires educator training and coaching to ensure they feel confident in (and equipped to) accurately recognize antecedents and identify functions of behavior, examined in the next section.

Function of Behavior

With an understanding of the antecedent, the next important component of understanding the target behavior is identifying the function of behavior, also referred to as the motivation. The function of behavior is the reason why the behavior occurs and may be the reason why a behavior persists. Functions typically serve a motivation to either obtain or avoid sensory stimulation, escape, attention, or access to tangibles (Hieneman, 2015).

Just like recording the antecedent helps inform appropriate supports, recording and analyzing trends in the function of behavior helps inform intervention selection as well. Adding a minimal list to record the function of a behavior is a great start. However, Tier 2 and Tier 3 teams benefit when more detail on the function is provided, such as:

- Obtain sensory stimulation
- Avoid sensory stimulation
- Avoid work; work is too difficult
- Avoid peer group work
- Avoid individual work
- Obtain adult attention
- Obtain peer attention
- Avoid adult attention
- Avoid peer attention
- Obtain tangible item

The more precisely the function of behavior can be pinpointed, the more accurately data teams can assign a Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention aligned to the function.

When a behavior is motivation-driven, a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) can also be used to determine the student's motivation. An FBA is an assessment that guides educators in understanding the environmental factors that potentially lead to a student's target behavior. Research shows that interventions informed by an FBA are more effective than those that are not (Martella, Nelson, Marchand-Martella, & O'Reilly, 2012).

It is critical that teams have access to many valid, reliable, and unbiased data points to guide their decision making—including valid and reliable SEB assessments and reliable and unbiased behavior incident data. These data-informed interventions are more likely to be effective because they're aligned to the student's specific need, whether that need is skill-based or motivation-driven. Data-informed interventions are also more likely to help the student find success more rapidly than will an intervention that requires continuous modification over time due to misalignment from the beginning.

Selecting Tier 2 and Tier 3 SEB Interventions

A plethora of SEB interventions exist. It's crucial for teams to be aware of various research-based SEB interventions so they have a menu of possible supports to match with the student's need. Example SEB interventions include:

- Check-In/Check-Out (CICO)
- Academic Behavior CICO
- Internalizing CICO
- Social Skills Instruction
- Homework, Organization, and Planning Skills (HOPS)
- Resilience Education Product (REP)
- Breaks Are Better
- Cognitive Behavior Intervention for Trauma in School (CBITS)
- Mentoring
- Behavior Contract
- Class Pass Intervention
- Positive Peer Reporting
- Self-Monitoring
- School-Home Note

Each of these interventions is better suited to various SEB needs. For example, for students avoiding peer attention, mentoring may be most appropriate. For students who are seeking to escape tasks and activities, then Breaks Are Better may be appropriate.

Just as valid, reliable, and unbiased data should be used to identify which students are in need of Tier 2 or Tier 3 SEB interventions, those data should also be used to identify the appropriate intervention to provide. Using data to determine whether a target behavior is rooted in a skill need (and if so, which skill) or if the behavior serves a function (and if so, which function and what the antecedent is) helps educators implement an intervention that's most likely to help the student succeed as quickly as possible.
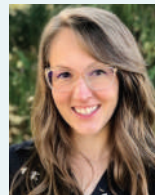
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Progress Monitoring Tier 2 and Tier 3 SEB Interventions

For a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) to be successful in matching intervention type and intensity to student need, data are needed to inform decision making across tiers of support. For this reason, progress monitoring is a critical component of an effective MTSS.

Progress monitoring is a type of assessment that is utilized frequently and periodically to determine change in response to a specific academic or social-emotional behavior (SEB) treatment or intervention (January et al., 2018). Continuous data collection through progress monitoring allows school teams to determine change in SEB functioning over a defined time frame. Multiple data points are more likely to be reliable estimates of a student's SEB functioning (Kilgus et al., 2015).

In addition, the relatively brief nature of progress monitoring assessments increases usability, allowing school teams to quickly adapt intervention supports throughout the year. Progress monitoring data can also increase the efficiency of an MTSS; when students respond quickly to treatment, educators are able to redirect those limited supports elsewhere as soon as appropriate.

Setting Up for Progress Monitoring Success

Teams should identify which students are selected for Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention and progress monitoring based upon screening data or teacher/parent referrals, along with additional assessment data as appropriate. Next, "target behaviors" should be identified (e.g., withdrawal, aggression) for support.

However, before a team begins progress monitoring with a student, there are several important considerations. First, the team should ensure they've selected a tool that is applicable to a specific student need or target behavior. For example, Direct Behavior Ratings (DBRs), are flexible in monitoring student's externalizing (Chafouleas et al., 2009) and internalizing (von der Embse et al., 2015) concerns.

Next, teams should plan data collection procedures including frequency (e.g., twice a week), location (e.g., math class), and recorder (e.g., math teacher).

Lastly, school teams should schedule regular data reviews where they will analyze progress monitoring data to determine student responsiveness and next steps.

Selecting a High-Quality Progress Monitoring Tool

Research has identified several key characteristics of a quality progress monitoring tool (Christ et al., 2009).

- **Efficiency:** First, a progress monitoring tool should be *efficient* such that it requires minimal resources and time to complete, allowing frequency in administration. However, efficiency is not limited to using the progress monitoring tool, but also the data scoring, analyzing, and decision making that is often facilitated by an electronic system.

- **Repeatability:** The second key characteristic is *repeatability*. If a progress monitoring tool is brief, it is more likely to be used frequently, which is necessary for decision making. A student's SEB functioning may be specific to a context or presenting stimulus; a repeatable progress monitoring tool is more likely to detect changes in SEB across contexts.

- **Flexibility:** *Flexibility* is a third important characteristic of an effective progress monitoring assessment. This allows a school to use one tool with many students across a range of presenting SEB concerns.

- **Defensibility:** Lastly, a progress monitor should be *defensible* with strong psychometric evidence permitting confidence in the decisions derived from the collected data. Progress monitoring tools that are defensible should be reliable, valid, and sensitive to change (Matta et al., 2020).

Methods for Progress Monitoring SEB Interventions

There are two primary methods for progress monitoring SEB interventions, including systematic direct observation (SDO) and DBRs.

Systematic Direct Observation (SDO)

SDO is a low-inference assessment. The recorder directly observes a student in a natural environment (e.g., math class) under certain, pre-specified conditions for the target behavior. SDO has a long history of research evidence and is highly flexible in allowing assessment of a range of behaviors. However, SDO can be time-intensive and difficult to complete with the frequency needed for intervention decisions, as they often require a third-party observer.

Direct Behavior Rating (DBR)

Alternatively, a DBR, such as the FastBridge DBR tool, is a hybrid between SDO and behavior rating scales (Chafouleas et al., 2009). DBRs are collected repeatedly under pre-specified conditions with the target behavior. DBR data are collected by teachers immediately after the rating period, allowing a low latency between rating and behavior. DBRs can be completed in a few seconds and are supported by dozens of peer-reviewed studies and independent research clearinghouses, such as the National Center for Intensive Intervention (NCII). DBRs can be single-item (Chafouleas et al., 2009), multi-item (Volpe & Briesch, 2013), or take the form of a daily report card or daily progress report (Owens et al., 2012). DBRs are often completed by an individual with the greatest access to the target behavior. It is recommended that teams establish a baseline level of behavior with a minimum of three data points before intervention implementation.

Leveraging SEB Progress Monitoring Data to Drive Decisions

There are three possible intervention decisions teams derive from progress monitoring data:

1 Stay the course with an intervention in its current form and frequency;

2 Change course with a different intervention or increase the intensity of current supports; or

3 Fade or remove supports if the student is successfully responding to treatment.

To make these decisions, teams will engage in visual analysis based upon the trend and variability of data in the intervention phase (Horner et al., 2005). Electronic data systems, such as eduCLIMBER, can make the visual process more feasible through automatic graphing and separation of baseline and treatment phases. Teams should be mindful that certain behaviors (e.g., internalizing concerns) may be more variable or require more time to respond to a certain treatment.

A second approach is to determine decision rules. While there is research to inform such decision rules in academic domains (Van Norman et al., 2018) there is a lack of evidence within SEB (Bruhn et al., 2020). Most often, teams identify "acceptable" performance levels (>20% disruptive behavior, Kilgus et al., 2012) before beginning treatment.

It is essential for teams to review multiple data sources to determine the primary area of concern and set an SEB goal that is matched to the supports provided.

In summary, progress monitoring is an essential tool to enhance the efficacy of an MTSS in providing integrated SEB supports. It allows school teams to determine responsiveness to intervention and to quickly adapt supports when needed.

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What is Disproportionality and Exclusionary Discipline?

According to the American Psychological Association, "exclusionary discipline encompasses any type of school disciplinary action that removes or excludes a student from his or her usual educational setting" (American Psychological Association Services). Several studies (Girvan et al., 2017; Monahan et al., 2014; Welch et al., 2014), including research done by the United States Government Accountability Office, illustrate students of color, boys, and students with disabilities most often experience significant punitive actions such as suspensions and expulsions when compared with their peers. This trend was found across all school types regardless of factors such as overall school poverty and grade level (United States Government Accountability Office Report to Congressional Requesters, 2018).

There is a well-documented link between exclusionary discipline and an increased likelihood to drop out, tendency to exhibit delinquent and potentially criminal behavior, and time spent in the corrections system (Balfanz et al., 2014; Monahan et al., 2014). In short, certain systemic educational practices put students of color, boys, and students with disabilities at a higher risk of being more severely disciplined, which can lead to higher rates of academic failure and incarceration.

Certain systemic educational practices put students of color, boys, and students with disabilities at a higher risk of being more severely disciplined.

Improving Equitable Outcomes by Rethinking Teacher and Administrator Actions

Because the issue is so pervasive, it can become a challenge to enact real and meaningful change; however, being aware of and consistent with consequences is the first step to bringing equity and justice for students who are disproportionately punished. Research indicates a strong correlation between exclusionary discipline practices and overall academic failure, but many educators cite in-the-moment escalation as the determining factor in selecting a consequence. This leaves little room for more objectively weighing the benefits and drawbacks of disciplinary actions.

While easier said than done, reflection can be a key determinant to beginning a cycle of change. Ask the following questions when experiencing negative student behaviors.

- Why is this student choosing to behave in this way?

- Are there any underlying factors that should be considered before determining a consequence?

- Is the consequence being issued consistently across all groups of students?

- Is the behavior so severe that it merits losing academic time, especially when the loss of instructional time can compound problems for students?

With an issue as complex and far-reaching as exclusionary discipline, how can educators best meet the needs of all students while still maintaining behavior standards? The answer is through monitoring behavior and academic data for high-risk students and tracking overall incident reporting to identify key trends.

Using Data to Track Exclusionary Discipline and Discourage Disproportionality

Teachers and administrators need the right tools to track and categorize incidents and monitor punitive measures that are being used with different student groups with respect to behavior.

By using a data management platform, educators can track referrals by behavior, location, time of day, individual student, and even by monthly averages. Analyzing these reports highlight common trends among referrals and behavior incidents. For example, after running a "Behavior Referrals by Location" report, it may become obvious that the common areas such as lockers or bathrooms are a prime area for problem behaviors to occur. This insight gives schools the opportunity to enact preventative measures such as additional adult supervision or limiting the number of students in the problem area.

Educators can also use reporting around behavior consequences to better understand the number of enacted consequences by key indicators such as ethnicity, grade level, special education status, and English Learner status. This can help to identify if a particular demographic group is experiencing a disproportionate severity of disciplinary action when compared. Schools and districts can also monitor the impacts of different disciplinary actions on groups of students to gauge effectiveness and outcomes.

Implementing PBIS for Preventative Action

Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), "is an evidence-based three-tiered framework for improving and integrating all of the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes" (United States Government Accountability Office Report to Congressional Requesters, 2018). The general purpose is to improve both student and teacher outcomes as well as to reduce the exclusionary discipline rate of all students but especially those groups who experience disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates.

PBIS allows schools and districts to institute behavioral expectations that are based on clear and actionable procedures and systems. Depending on the needs of students engaging in noncompliant behavior, Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports are provided, which involves students and staff in more intensive behavior interventions. In order to determine which level of intervention intensity each student needs, PBIS relies heavily on collecting and analyzing disaggregated behavior data and progress monitoring.

PBIS is a popular method of behavior management and is well-respected in many districts and schools across the country. In order to implement these procedures and systems, collecting and analyzing data is non-negotiable. eduCLIMBER provides strong analytic tools for teachers and administrators seeking to implement PBIS, track student outcomes, and minimize exclusionary discipline practices.
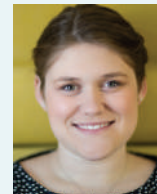
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CONCLUSION

Integrating academics and SEB provides a foundation for students to succeed in learning and be thoughtful, caring, and compassionate scholars and citizens. The strategies, practices, and insights shared in this playbook will help you build and refine systems and structures that promote positive student outcomes and learning environments.

As with academics, data are critical to ensuring equitable, effective, learner-centered SEB supports. Illuminate Education bolsters data-driven SEB supports with valid and reliable SEB assessments combined with MTSS collaboration and management tools.

Ensure All Students Can Succeed in Learning and Thrive in College, Career, and Beyond

FastBridge
SEB Screening and Progress Monitoring Assessments

Identify the SEB skills students need support to develop and ensure that SEB instruction and interventions are effective for students.

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Empower and streamline data-informed decisions with whole child data visualizations and built-in tools for behavior incident tracking and analysis, SEB intervention management, student plans, and more.

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