



Superintendent
Greg Baker

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To: Dr. Greg Baker, Superintendent
From: Trina Hall, Director of Teaching and Learning,
on behalf of P-8 Social & Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum Advisory
Date: May 29, 2018
RE: Proposal for adoption of instructional materials for elementary and middle school SEL

Introduction

The need for a review and initiative around Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) came about through teacher request for support in SEL, administrative concern with supporting behaviors, and the work at the state level developing new SEL standards. In addition, The Bellingham Promise, serves as a foundational document with strong ties to SEL. Nearly two-thirds of the Promise Outcomes are related to social and emotional skills, such as *leaders, collaborators and team players, confident individuals who continuously challenge themselves, respectful and compassionate humans, and critical thinkers and problem solvers*. Furthermore, the promise calls for a collective commitment that our students are cared for and respected, and states that all children should be loved and that the whole child is important. These aspects of the promise, along with others, are in direct alignment with SEL skills and competencies.

Currently the SEL instruction in our schools is done informally by classroom teachers and with push in whole class lessons by counselors on social skills development, the amount of lessons varying by school. Currently we do not have Tier 1 instructional materials for SEL in our system, with the exception of some Second Step curriculum materials (designed for Tier 1) that most school counselors have in their inventory, publication dates ranging from 1997-2002. Formal training or suggested use has not been provided with these resources. Washington State OSPI is in the process of developing state standards for SEL, which have previously not existed. This is in line with a national push across the country to develop, implement and support Social and Emotional Learning through explicit instruction that has a scope and sequence within and across grades, and to establish safe and engaging learning environments in our schools and classrooms. As an initial step in our districtwide response to the needs related to SEL it was determined that a Tier 1 curriculum for preschool – eighth grade (P-8) should be selected and adopted.

In August 2017, applications for participation on the *P-8 Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum Advisory* were solicited from staff, parents and community members. The committee met seven times between September and February and reconvened for an additional meeting one time in May to review the input collected and finalize the recommendation. The composition of the committee included representatives for classroom teachers, specialist (special education, library, and interventionist), counselors, and school administrators. In addition, membership included parent and community member representatives who not only represented their child's school but also represented partnerships with higher education (WWU & WCC), YMCA,

and the mental health profession. The advisory was co-chaired by three directors in the department of Teaching and Learning, including the Wellness Director and the Director of Student Services.

Due to the large number of parent and community members volunteering to serve on the advisory, numerous people received notification of not being selected for advisory membership. In order to involve these interested individuals in the process and hear their input and perspectives, a Community Forum was held at the start of the process in September. Eight parents and community members and several interested district employees attended this initial session and provided insight and input to help guide the work. This group was updated throughout the process and received special invitation to the Community Forum that was held in May to learn about the finalist programs and provide input.

Plan of Work:

The work of the advisory built on the recent work of the state in its efforts to adopt SEL standards to be implemented statewide, and the work of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) which is a leading organization in this field. The plan of work was outlined in the committee charter and followed a traditional curriculum materials adoption process.

After gaining common knowledge on the SEL work in the nation, state, region and our district, the advisory worked to establish criteria to guide the selection. The advisory leaned heavily on the well-respected works of CASEL, Harvard Graduate School of Education, and the Wallace Foundation, who each had recently reviewed SEL curricula against established criteria and created publications for districts to use in reviewing and selecting SEL curricula. Using these publications, in addition to our locally established criteria, the advisory reviewed programs and narrowed selection. For elementary, 32 programs were reviewed, narrowed to 12, then to four, with the four finalists conducting publisher presentations. Following the publisher presentations, the advisory input was amazingly consistent with *Caring School Community* as the finalist program for Tier 1 classroom instruction in all elementary schools, grades K-5, along with professional learning from Sound Discipline on building resiliency and positive discipline.

For middle school, over 30 programs were reviewed, narrowed to six, then to four. The three finalist programs were examined more deeply with time spent with the publishers as well as interviews with other district users. *RULER* emerged as our top selection for all four middle schools, with implementation in a manner that is schoolwide and includes the adult learning components of the program along with the explicit lessons and intentional integration. As an aside, some of the programs reviewed were found to fit into the equation in differing capacities. For example, *Mind Up* was selected for use in a future middle school health class for social and emotional learning focused on brain development and mindfulness. And the program *Where Everybody Belongs (WEB)*, which is already in the process of being implemented in our middle schools and high schools (known as LINK at high school) was recognized as another critical component of our SEL picture focusing on supporting student transitions and establishing peer mentors for social learning and support.

For preschool a small sub-group worked on the review and selection of programs for our preschool settings. This also included a focus on our partner preschools and our community agencies offering preschool and wanting to align with the district. The selection of preschool SEL curriculum is currently on hold and the small group will reconvene in June and July to make a final determination. Currently there are four programs still being considered.

List of core instructional materials that emerged as finalists during the process: (for a complete list of all programs reviewed please refer to advisory website notes)

Materials	Publisher
<u>Elementary:</u>	
<i>Caring School Community</i>	Collaborative Classroom
<i>Harmony SEL</i>	Sanford Harmony at National University
<i>Second Steps</i>	Committee for Children
<i>Sound Discipline</i>	Sound Discipline
<u>Middle School:</u>	
<i>Mind Up</i>	Goldie Hawn Foundation
<i>RULER</i>	Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence
<i>Ripple Effect</i>	Ripple Effect
<i>Sources of Strength</i>	Sources of Strength
<u>Preschool:</u>	
<i>Conscious Discipline</i>	Conscious Discipline
<i>Harmony SEL</i>	Sanford Harmony at National University
<i>RULER</i>	Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence
<i>Second Step</i>	Committee for Children

As mentioned above, after thorough review and discussion *Caring School Community* and *RULER* emerged as the programs that most closely aligned with the established criteria and vision for elementary and middle school, respectively. They each are school wide approaches, include both explicit instruction and intentional integration, have a strong research base, proven effectiveness, and have been successfully implemented in numerous schools and districts, both in our region and across the country. The review included talking and interviewing other district users of these programs in Washington State and California, and researching CASEL’s Collaborative District Initiative (CDI) districts and their effective use of these programs. Collaboration with other districts in our region who are doing the same review and implementation work for SEL curricula supported our process, these districts included Anacortes, Bellevue, Edmonds, Highline, and Seattle.

Input to the Process

In addition to the work in the advisory meetings, teachers who were not on the committee were asked to give feedback regarding the finalist programs. Review sessions were held for elementary teachers to come and learn about the curriculum being proposed. There were also online and in person review opportunities for elementary and middle school teachers, parents and community members, and we hosted two separate trainings for the purpose of input on the proposed programs.

The elementary curriculum of *Caring School Community* has a daily component of morning circle and closing circle. Approximately 70% of our elementary classrooms are already using a morning meeting approach to begin their days, thus making this implementation something that honors the full plate of teachers and can be implemented in an already existing structure of instruction. The main morning circle being implemented currently in the schools is *Responsive Classroom’s Morning Meeting*. The advisory spent time comparing the *Caring School Community* morning meeting with *Responsive Classroom’s*. It was discovered that the author of *Responsive Classrooms* model was a contributing author on the *Caring School Community* curriculum

development and that the two approaches include some of the same components. The plus for the *Caring School Community* morning meetings, that the advisory believes will make the difference in effectiveness and learning, is the scope and sequence of lessons across and within grade levels where all social and emotional competencies are being explicitly taught in the first 10 weeks of school each year; and they then are repeated recursively the remaining 18 weeks of the school year for solidifying understanding and providing opportunity for practice. This, plus the additional components of *Caring School Community*, will make this program a strong piece of our students' learning for both SEL and academics.

For the additional input on the *RULER* curriculum a small sub-group spent additional time with the publishers and were able to review the online *RULER Community* resources. In addition, talking with teachers and directors in Bellevue and Seattle school districts gave us additional insight into the value add of implementing this curricula school wide. Two middle school teams also attended the *RULER* training, *Anchors of Emotional Intelligence*, to learn more deeply about the program and interact with a school who has fully implemented the materials and approach in their school. They heard from the author, Mark Brackett, of the importance of adult learning and awareness of co-regulating. All of this input and learning further solidified the decision to recommend *RULER* for the middle school SEL curriculum.

Public Forum

A parent/community forum was held on May 2. Although in person participation at the forum was low the participants in attendance expressed their excitement about a social and emotional learning curriculum for our students and asked good and thoughtful questions. They were appreciative of the district's efforts to address the needs in this area of social and emotional learning. An online survey for parents/community members was sent to elementary and middle school families in early May with a two-week window for review and input of the finalist programs. There were no responses to the online survey.

Committee Information

Link to minutes and meeting documents can be found here: <http://bellingshamschools.org/about/committees-advisory-groups/social-emotional-curriculum-advisory-group/>

Recommendation:

The advisory group concluded with its final meeting on May 23, 2018. We strongly recommend the adoption of *Caring School Community* materials for K-5 core instruction for all classrooms in our elementary schools, and *RULER* curriculum materials and approach for all middle schools. We propose a differentiated implementation schedule, with all elementary and middle schools fully implementing by the fall of 2019. We believe these materials and their use with fidelity to the program designs will make a significant difference in our students being ready to engage fully and productively in learning and life.

For more information about *Caring School Community*, please visit the publisher's website:

<https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/programs/caring-school-community/>

For more information about *RULER*, please visit the publisher's website:

<http://ei.yale.edu/ruler/ruler-overview/>

Advisory Members

Elementary:

Teachers: Barbara DelWraa (Roosevelt/Cordata), Molly Foote (King), Teri Herda (Geneva)

Specialist: Jodi Kinzel (Carl Cozier)

Counselors: Haruna Aileen Gardner (Parkview), Kirke MahyHestad (Carl Cozier), Kari Miller (Sunnyland)

Principals: Analisa Ficklin (Cordata), Lynn Heimsoth (Sunnyland)

Middle School:

Teachers: Glenda Everett (Kulshan), Darilyn Sigel (Whatcom)

Specialist: Ryan Leckie (District Support)

Counselors: Kevin Terpstra (Kulshan), Erin Neisenger (Fairhaven/Shuksan)

Principals: Ann Buswell (Whatcom), Tina Allsop (Shuksan)

Partnerships:

Elementary Parents: Anne Granberg (Roosevelt/YMCA), Elizabeth Snyder Weinstein (Columbia)

Middle School Parents: Cindy Palmer (Kulshan), Jeffrey Hart (Fairhaven/WWU)

Community Members: Diana Gruman (WWU), Darcie Donegan (WCC)

District Office:

Early Learning: Debbie Haney (District Early Learning)

Advisory Administrative Assistant: Karri Neuhauser

Advisory Co-Chairs: Trina Hall (Director of Teaching and Learning), Jessica Sankey (Director of Health & Wellness), Steve Morse (Director of Student Services)